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## Edward Irving, Christology and the Spirit

McFarlane, Graham W.P

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Edward Irving, Christology and The Spirit  
~~CHRISTOLOGY AND THE SPIRIT IN THE TEACHING OF EDWARD IRVING.~~

GRAHAM W.P. McFARLANE

Ph.D

KING'S COLLEGE (KQC)

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1990

It is now over 150 years since the death of Edward Irving. In that time very little has been done to establish his name as a credible theologian. However, the little that has been published suggests that Irving is a neglected theologian of the last century, whose christology offers perceptive insights for the present debate. This thesis is not, however, an apologetic for Irving. Rather it is an attempt to present a christology which attributes a meaningful place to the Spirit in incarnation. Irving's significance lies in the fact that his is such a christology. By presenting his understanding of the being of God and that of human being, we are able to see how he brings together the persons of the Son and Spirit in the act of incarnation.

Parts I and II are a presentation of Irving's doctrines of God as Trinity and of human being respectively. Each provides us with an understanding of the relation which both the Son and Spirit have to the divine and human in incarnation. Consequently, they provide the framework within which we are able to understand better Irving's overall christology: of how he brings together the being of God and that of human being in incarnation. The major thrust of the thesis is expanded in Part III, where Irving's christology is expanded in light of that which is raised in Parts I and II.

Woven throughout Parts I, II and III, has been the attempt to contextualise Irving's theology within the history and development of Christian doctrine. As a result, an indirect aim of the thesis has been to show not only that Irving's christology develops from within mainstream theology, but that it does so by developing data which is essential to that traditional interpretation of incarnation.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

Certain authors, speaking of their works, say, "my book," "my commentary," "my history,"...They resemble middle class people who have a house of their own, and always have "my house" on their tongue. They would do better to say, "our book," "our commentary," "our history"...because there is in them usually more of other people's than their own.

(Pascal, *Pensées*, #43)

This is not "my" thesis: its existence owes as much to others as it does to myself. Were it not for that rare breed of humanity, Ronnie and Caroline, Charles and Alison, Jean-Marc and Jenny, Kenny and Shona, who have cultivated the art of an 'open-door,' the troughs and isolation of research would have been that much more difficult to put up with.

Neither can it be "my" thesis, for it has grown out of discussion, argument, advice and criticism from a very intimate coterie: my thanks to Al Spence and Bev Clack.

In addition, the theological content of this thesis cannot be claimed to be "mine." My theological training has been greatly influenced and encouraged by the theological forum at King's College. In particular, I am indebted to my supervisor, Professor Colin Gunton for introducing me to the theology of Edward Irving. I owe him a heartfelt thanks both for his faith in me and his careful directing and encouraging supervision.

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Lastly, this work owes its genesis to the suggestion and encouragement of my parents. Their love and support throughout my theological training deserves more than 'thanks'. To them I dedicate this thesis.



## INTRODUCTION.

To change our standpoint is to transform our habits of thought. It is not to exchange one theory for another, but to change the basis of all theory. To achieve this must...be a long, co-operative process; a stumbling advance in country where there are no beaten paths to follow, and where every step may lead us astray.'

Why is it we are so wary of another's ideology, so quick to defend our own and so indisposed to the unfamiliar and untried? Why is it we are so unwilling to detach ourselves from the 'herd' and stumble along uncharted paths? Is it not, perhaps, because our own ideas and 'habits of thought' represent not merely lightly held opinions but the very means by which each of us makes sense of the world about? Indeed, do they not become the very means by which we identify ourselves: that complex personal identity of 'I', 'me', in relation to or over against 'you', 'them'? If so, it is hardly surprising, then, that the process by which we come to accept another's perspective is often a tortuous affair, fraught with difficulties: for in that process we do not simply exchange new theories but touch on and question the very way in which we perceive ourselves. Such are the dynamics involved in the human need to understand and make sense of its own being.

When we consider the various Christian understandings of reality we find in each a similar outlook, for lying at the very heart of Christian faith is a fundamentally personal assertion: truth comes to us in and through the *person* of Jesus Christ. With this notion comes a certain degree of obscurity, for like a person, 'truth' cannot be apportioned into neat definitions. Like a person, it defies dogmatic categorisation. It can be as self-effacing as it is self-revealing. In a sense it is defined apophatically, for like a person, it can be more neatly defined negatively, than by means of a comprehensive series of enlightening assertions. And, again, as in personal contact where more can be communicated in the silence that exists between friends than in the din of excessive chatter, so the way of truth can

be as contemplative as it is discursive: 'I never suspected the way of truth was a way of silence where affectionate chat is but a robbers' ambush and even good music in shocking taste' (Auden).

However, perhaps the personal parallelism with the way in which we establish our epistemic priorities is best highlighted in the dynamics involved in the *compatibility* and *exchange* of theories. And here it is at its most provocative: does one theory hold preference *over all others* or to the *exclusion* of all others? It is this aspect of epistemology which has characterised the debate between Karl Popper, the scientist,<sup>2</sup> and the historian of science, Thomas Kuhn.<sup>3</sup> It is a debate which offers valuable insight for the historical and systematic theologian.

Popper argues simply that from out of the plethora of scientific hypotheses erected in order to make sense of data, we choose one over against the others. Such a hypothesis or scientific truth-claim is conjectural: it is hypothetically deduced by 'trial and the elimination of error.' Good science, therefore, consists in being able to reject one hypothesis for a better. However, until then, there is a level of commensurability between differing hypotheses. Scientific truth-claims, in a sense, parallel the composite knowledge by which we build up personal knowledge of those around us. Such knowledge may even become consistent to the degree that we feel able to say we 'know' a person. Yet such knowledge is fragile: one indeterminable action, statement or event may set the 'character-hypothesis' in disarray, necessitating another 'character-hypothesis' to be established.

On the other hand, Kuhn argues that we operate within only one frame of reference, with only one set of prejudices, which Kuhn identifies as a 'paradigm'. Normal science consists in identifying data in accord with this paradigm: the latter precedes the former. This paradigm's priority can be challenged only by means of a 'revolution' in thought. Until then, it accommodates no rival. There can be no dialogue between paradigms: they are incommensurable.



Whilst Kuhn limits his own theory to the history of scientific development, it is possible to say that in as much as we all hold to certain prejudices in order to make sense of reality, so theological data is interpreted through often unquestioned prejudices, through a particular paradigm. And perhaps more so in theology than in other disciplines: for are we not concerned in theology with the ultimate, the divine, and with knowledge of the Creator in our hands have we not the key to all understanding? Surely such a hermeneutic resists all rivals?

Perhaps ideally, the Popperian notion of preference is worthy of our consideration, wherein one hypothesis is preferred within the wider context of alternative hypotheses until new data causes another to be preferred in its place, and so on. It is certainly true that at any given moment there may be several different sets of prejudices being applied to a particular topic. However, and certainly in the history of theological development, the Kuhnian assertion appears to be nearer reality: that only one paradigm rules supreme at a time, dictating the manner in which subsequent data is examined and interpreted.

It is this methodological tension in which theologians find themselves. And in their habitual dealing with the holy they run the risk of developing theological myopia when their prejudices become too rigid. Yet it is a risk from which they can never escape: it constitutes the very essence of theological exploration, of 'normal theology,' the theological parallel to the Kuhnian understanding of 'normal' science, wherein data is evaluated from within an accepted paradigm. Only as the normal theological paradigm becomes intransigent and intractable does the need for a revolution in perspective arise and become possible. It is a revolution in thought which demands not merely an 'exchange' of one theory for another, but a 'change in the basis of all theory'.

The insights from Popper and Kuhn highlight the dynamics involved in early christological development. On the one hand, certain

'conjectures' (Popper) come to be 'preferred' over others, for example, that Jesus Christ is both *very God and very man; only that which is assumed is healed*; that Jesus Christ is *equal in being to God the Father rather than a creature*, however exalted. These 'conjectures' serve to earth christological talk within a meaningful understanding of salvation. They make sense of faith, of talk about Jesus Christ.

However, these 'preferred conjectures' are themselves interpreted within an accepted set of 'prejudices': within a specific 'paradigm' (Kuhn). If we turn to that period of greatest christological development, the third, fourth and fifth centuries, we begin to see an over-play between the Popperian and Kuhnian epistemologies. On the one hand, we find a Popperian development occurring, where primacy was sought for certain hypotheses. If it is possible to indulge in simplification, we could say that the 'Alexandrian' christological paradigm, the *Word-flesh* paradigm refused to compromise with its nearest competitor, the 'Antiochene' *Word-man* paradigm. In the end, whether for better or worse, the former became dominant over the latter. As a result, a 'settlement' in theological perception and priority occurred. The dominant *Word-flesh* paradigm came to exercise greater influence than that of its increasingly incommensurable Antiochene counterpart.

Perhaps from herein a more Kuhnian development is observable. For once primacy was established, the dominant Alexandrian prejudice or paradigm set the course of subsequent development. As a result those who clung to alternative paradigms had to make a geographical move in order to maintain it. It appeared inadvisable to be a party to more than one set of prejudices.

What we have, therefore, in this simplified example, is an illustration of how the Popperian and Kuhnian epistemologies can be seen to be at work in the history of theological development. On the one hand, there will always be competing paradigms. On the other, they appear to be unable to exist side by side. They vie to become the standard for 'normal' theology. On the whole, western



christological investigation has followed a 'Word-flesh' prejudice. Subsequent anomalies discovered, have been discussed in relation to the expected *Word-flesh* goal. In addition, the history of christological development suggests the impossibility of commensurability between conflicting prejudices. What has Alexandria to do with Lyons, Wittenburg, Canterbury, let alone Antioch? Perhaps more than has been historically credited: for each suggests a possible framework within which faith may seek understanding, and each is therefore of value in that goal. However, the Popperian response, wherein alternative sets of prejudices are held together, has not been the historical norm in theology.

Amidst the babble of such ancient and conflicting prejudices one modern response has been to perform a 'theological revolution,' to reject one paradigm in favour of another, which it was hoped, could make more sense of the data. Such was the response of the Enlightened *philisophe*. That some response was necessary in light of the conflict developing between the entrenched dominant theological paradigm and contemporary philosophy is beyond question. An alternative theological paradigm was to emerge that would revolutionise the way in which the being of God, Christ and human being were to be understood. However, the babble that followed affirmed the incommensurability of subsequent contending theological paradigms: their prejudices precluded dialogue.

But if this is so, have we not come to an impasse? What alternative is there - *another* theological revolution? Whilst it was, perhaps, an inevitable consequence of the inherent inadequacies of the dominant western theological paradigm against which it came into conflict, the assurance displayed in its rejection was itself misplaced. Consequently, its solution was misguided. But such a criticism does not lead necessarily to an impasse, for there is a possible *via media*.

Perhaps here I should introduce my own 'prejudice:' it is one grounded in the belief that the way forward in christological interpretation is to be found not in a revolution *over* but *within* the

dominant paradigm. At the very heart of the data inherent to early Christian prejudices, to the earliest of paradigms lie essential components left undeveloped not only at their initial formulation but also in subsequent development. There is, firstly, the belief that we meet the threefoldness of God in the act of incarnation, and that secondly, the Son becomes incarnate by the power of the Spirit and as human being receives the Spirit at baptism. At the very least, we may say that on both accounts there appears to be an intimate relation between the being of God as Son in incarnation and that of the Spirit.

So why has this relation not been expanded in any significant way? The answer lies, perhaps, in the way by which this data has been filtered through a particular paradigm or set of prejudices. By preferring a paradigm which stressed the primacy of the Word in incarnation to the exclusion of the Spirit, a foundation has been established which unconsciously precludes any serious development in understanding and interpreting the Spirit's relation to the Son in incarnation.

My concern, therefore, is with the place attributed to the Spirit in incarnation: a pneumatological interest within a thoroughly christological setting, demanding a re-orientation of our dominant christological prejudice. As Macmurray points out, this involves entering relatively uncharted territory 'where every step may lead us astray.' It is my belief, however, that until we do so, our competing paradigms will remain incommensurable, (Kuhn). However, I also believe that there can be a level of commensurability between paradigms, (Popper). In relation to our consideration of the two dominant and competing sets of prejudices of Antioch and Alexandria, I believe they will only become commensurable once we begin to take seriously the place scripture, tradition and Christian experience attribute the Spirit in incarnation. Only then shall we be more adequately furnished with the means to ascertain whether our historical prejudices have been truly beneficial in the believer's quest of *fides quaerens intellectum*.



Our task is, therefore, to present a meaningful interpretation of the Spirit's role in incarnation within the predominant christological paradigm. It is this goal towards which this thesis has striven. Like Macmurray, I have to admit that such a change in the basis of our theory, for that is what I believe the result may be, will indeed be arrived at only after a 'long, co-operative process,' a process which has begun to gain momentum in the latter part of the twentieth century.

It has been, therefore, a great encouragement to discover in the sermons of Edward Irving what may be described in Kuhnian terms as a 'revolution' in theological perspective. It is a revolution in *theological* knowledge, not in the sense that here we confront new hitherto undisclosed data, quite the reverse! Rather, what we confront in Irving is not a rejection of data, but a reappraisal of the same data from within a changed set of prejudices; from within a new paradigm.

The method assumed in this thesis has been undertaken in order to highlight the way in which Irving understands the two fundamental components of his christology from within this new set of prejudices, this alternative paradigm. These I have identified as the being of God and human being. In so doing, not only have we, for the first time, an explicit presentation of Irving's understanding of the being of God and human being, but the means by which we are able to grasp, more clearly, his interpretation of incarnation from within this particular paradigm. In so doing, it is my hope to present Irving's christology as a means by which our context of christological possibilities is expanded; by which we may realise the place we give to the Spirit in incarnation and in his relation to both Father and Son. As a result, we may assist those who nervously feel the traditional form of christology has met its 'judgement day,'<sup>4</sup> that 'we have seen the best of our time.'<sup>5</sup> It is my belief that this, however does not necessarily need to be judgment day, but simply a new morning of theological enterprise.



2. FOOTNOTES.

1. J. Macmurray: The Self as Agent. London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1957, p85.
2. K.R. Popper: Conjectures and Refutations: the Growth of Scientific Knowledge. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963.
3. T.S. Kuhn: The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970<sup>2</sup>.
4. E. Dickenson: Collected Poems. New York: Routledge, 1982, p112.
5. King Lear, Scene 1 Act 2.

PART I: IRVING'S DOCTRINE OF DIVINE BEING.

## 1. Introduction.

What is it that we know so well and cannot speak? What is it that we want to say and cannot tell? What is it that keeps swelling in our hearts its grand and solemn music, that is aching in our throats, that is pulsing like a strange, wild grape, through all the conduits of our blood, that maddens us with its exultant and intolerable joy and that leaves us tongueless, wordless, maddened by our fury to the end? We do not know. All that we know is that we lack a tongue that could reveal, a language that could perfectly express the wild joy swelling to a music in our heart, the wild pain welling to a strong ache in our throat, the wild cry mounting to a madness in our brain, the thing, the word, the joy we know so well, and cannot speak?'

Theology, like history, repeats itself: it has to, so few people pay heed to it. But Christian theology, unlike history, traditionally does so in the dialectic of historical and trans-historical inquiry. Herein lies its essential character: the belief that within human history, the infinite and transcendent are expressed in a particular manner, in the history of Jesus Christ. At this nexus we confront the being of God, being both in terms of essence and action. In the dialectic between the historic and the transcendent we confront the hermeneutical problem of theology: the trinitarian expression of God's being demands interpretation. However, at a time when it is no longer fashionable to celebrate Truth but rather the impersonal IT by which we create our own definition of being, the task befalls the theologian to re-present and re-construct the givenness of the Christian story in a manner that makes sense to the respective audience whilst at the same time respecting the content of the Gospel.

The mystery of language, by which this task occurs, lies in its self-effacing character: "*nihil de suo habens sed totum de illa scientia de qua nascitur*. It has its being in its revealing."<sup>2</sup> However, it is hardly impotent: the object of revelation requires some sort of conceptuality in order to facilitate expression. The miracle of human language<sup>3</sup> is expressed not only in this creative act, but in the fecundity and creativity to which these formulated ideas lend themselves. A word becomes the key to unlock a world of ideas; ideas, which in turn take root, develop and lend themselves to further creativity. If this human creativity manifests itself in the capacity to express and identify, then



its supreme illustration lies in its ability to give form to that which never before has been expressed. So ventured John;

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.<sup>4</sup>

Never before had such an object required expression: something hitherto unspoken broke through the established perimeters identifying God's being, demanding conceptualisation. What now does it mean to talk of a God whose Word is expressed in incarnation? Surely not that Jesus Christ introduces us for the first time to an understanding of God, but rather that "the history of Jesus becomes a route to rethink the doctrine of God...Jesus Christ 'intersects' with those understandings of and questions about God which human beings already have, calling into question what is known and compelling a rethinking of received conceptions."<sup>5</sup>

So the hermeneutical task of the Church is begun, involving a longer and more protracted history of linguistic and philosophical definition. The history of this latter development, however, did not develop in unison with the initial response of the first Christian communities. Rather, it assumed a twofold approach in its inquiry of the Divine being: the explication on the one hand of the essential unity of God (*De Deo uno*), and the triunity of God, (*De Deo trino*) on the other. Despite the human proclivity to stress either the unity or triunity of God, each at the expense of the other, the theologoumenon has become an interpretative principle by which God's being is explained, and thus a necessary element of Christian belief. We may express the relationship between the act of God in Christ and the theologoumenon in terms similar to that between object and language. The 'object' in question, God's incarnation, finds both expression through and meaning in language: the theologoumenon. Whilst faith is placed in the saving action of God in Jesus Christ, we understand this saving action in light of its theologoumenon. Consequently, the earliest experiences of the God of Jesus Christ necessitated a distinction to be made within the Divine being, as Father, Son and Spirit, in order to make sense of this saving action. On the basis of their experience in and

through Jesus Christ, the early Christian communities confessed faith in a God who is both the one and the many.

When we turn to consider the theological basis of Edward Irving's doctrine of Christ, it is of interest to note that at a time when post-Kantian theological method dictated a distinct separation between the doctrines of God and Christ, the method of intimately associating the two reflects that assumed by Edward Irving, who sought to express a hermeneutic which united them in a manner more radical than had hitherto been presented within his tradition.

### 1.2. Unity and Diversity.

The manner by which he achieves this reflects his unity with and difference from his own theological tradition. His unity with that tradition is reflected in the priority Irving gives to the scriptural presentation of Jesus Christ: both as the Johannine incarnate Word, and as the inspired man of the Synoptics. The one we come to know as Father, Son and Spirit is the God of Scripture. The practical task of identifying God's being distinguishes the Christian God from all others: he is the God of Scripture. Therefore, Irving seeks to identify the being of God in terms of this scriptural givenness. His is not the God of the philosophers: the identity of God remains firmly attached to the biblical revelation.

However, any given hermeneutic is moulded by the specific context within which the interpreter exists. For Irving, his context demanded a practical and scriptural end: knowledge of God must be practical. It must arouse the hearer to service and devotion for God. It serves the needs of the believers. In this he follows his Calvinistic tradition. Like Calvin's, his doctrine of God is not a highly refined dogma. He has little to say on the nature of God in any abstract sense, and gives no systematic account of the existence, nature and attributes of God.

Who is our God? He is the one we meet in Scripture - and in each present history. Although complete and essential knowledge of God is beyond human



comprehension, knowledge of the *mysterium trinitatis* is given through his gracious action primarily in the historical act of incarnation and the ongoing action of God in redemption from the Church out to the created order. Thus, Irving's *theologia* is dictated by his *oikonomia* in a manner similar to that of the Fathers, typified by Basil, who affirms that "the divine nature is too exalted to be perceived as objects of enquiry are to be perceived," and thus, are we, of necessity "guided in the investigation of the divine nature by its operations."<sup>6</sup> However, it is also of consequence that Irving's *oikonomia*, unlike many of the Fathers, is intimately moulded by his *theologia*. The specific implication of this point of method will become more explicit as our discussion of Irving's doctrines of God and human being develops.

Like Calvin, Irving understands the doctrine of the Trinity to be a postulate of the believer's profoundest religious experience, given in the very act of salvation itself.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, he clearly differentiates between the 'order of being' and the 'order of knowing.' Although the triune God is understood to be the source of all being, Irving seeks to present an epistemology which is built upon his understanding of the being of God, and which is the linch-pin to his understanding of salvation. Unlike the methods adopted by his contemporaries Schleiermacher and Coleridge,<sup>8</sup> the being of the triune God becomes the conceptual and theological key to Irving's entire thought, for he understands it to undergird the very credibility of his christology and therefore of any meaningful and adequate doctrine of salvation.

If the doctrine of the Trinity be the foundation of all orthodox doctrine..If the Trinity be the only eternally existing substance, from the operation of whom all things that are have been created out of nothing that is seen, but out of the invisible will, word, and Spirit of the Godhead; if all things that are, and everything that is, be but the shewing forth of the Divine Essence of the Triune God..then I do say, that every act of the preacher of the gospel is incomplete, yea, is not an act of preaching Christ, which doth not contain the three offices of the Divine Persons, and display them.<sup>9</sup>

It is not, however, the success or lack of success of Irving's hermeneutic vis-à-vis Calvin's which most interests us at present. It is rather two



facts which his theological method raises with particular force. Firstly, Irving re-presents to the theological West a movement away from the "Augustinian emphasis upon the philosophical premis of divine unity" which tends to flatten the distinction between the persons of the Trinity.<sup>10</sup> The inbreaking of the Divine presence in incarnation is that which determines the Christian experience of God: God's history has become our history. Arguing both empirically and analogically, Irving distinguishes between Divine and human being whilst holding to the belief that the Church's experience of God reveals something of the Divine Mystery. This is argued, however, not from any *a priori* philosophical concept of God, but rather from his scriptural and formularistic understanding, wherein is reflected the continuity with his theological inheritance, as well as the means by which his doctrine of God is safeguarded from any abstract speculation.<sup>11</sup>

Conversely, in what way does Irving's differ from this tradition? Herein do we touch on the very kernel thrust of our thesis, for it our desire to show the relevant development Irving makes of that theological tradition which he inherited, and that he did so specifically by developing his understanding of God's being as Spirit both in incarnation and in Godhead. In Part I it is, our purpose, therefore, to present Irving's doctrine of God as well as to show how he establishes from it a means of facilitating a pneumatic dimension to his understanding of incarnation.

## 2. The Grace of God.

Irving's thoughts on the doctrine of God as Trinity were given shape and form in 1825 by means of a series of sermons on the Trinity, preached to his Hatton Garden congregation. Little attention was accorded them then nor in 1828 when they were first put into print. Subsequent biographers and scholars have continued this inattention to the creative expression Irving gives to his understanding of the being of God. Subsequently, the importance of these germinal sermons to Irving's theology has gone unnoticed, the only exception to this trend being Irving's early biographer

when commenting upon the early sermons on the Trinity first preached at his Hatton Garden church.

These sermons, though of a very different character from those bursts of bold and splendid oratory by which the preacher had made his great reputation, are perhaps more remarkable than any of his other productions.<sup>12</sup>

However, this overall inattention is wholly in character with the events surrounding Irving's life. The heated examination within which his doctrine of the human nature of Christ was deliberated, itself, was divorced from its relation to God's being expounded in these early sermons. It is, however, uncertain whether a full appreciation of Irving's doctrine of God would have aided or abetted the final denunciation, for it reflected the same degree of individuality as that found in his later christological sermons.<sup>13</sup>

This streak of individuality manifests itself in the fact that whilst it is for the many to accede, only the few inquire. What is acceptable for the former, often remains unsatisfactory for the latter. Irving's theology identifies him as one of 'the few,' for whilst the many are content to assent to credal belief in one God who is Father, Son and Spirit, Irving's interest lies both in ontological enquiry "concerned primarily with *Being*," and with the ontical in its concern "primarily with *entities* and the facts about them."<sup>14</sup> With particular respect to his doctrine of God, he seeks not so much to explain the existence of God as one and many, as to give theological expression to the creative activity of Father, Son and Spirit in incarnation and redemption. Therefore, his is not an explicit analysis of God's being. Rather, it is a theological means geared to a specifically soteriological end: the manner by which the grace of God comes with certainty to the object of this grace, human being in its separation from God.

Yet his is also a concern to delineate the subject of grace, for if human beings are the objects of divine grace, from whence and from whom does this grace flow? Within what context may we identify this grace and by what means may we be certain that we are indeed beneficiaries of divine



grace? Irving's answer incorporates two distinct criteria. Firstly, that the quality of grace is contingent upon its source, that is, it is *God's* grace. Thus, Irving is at pains to establish the Son's divinity in order to contest the Arian, Socinian and Unitarian notions that the Son is an exalted creature.<sup>15</sup> Secondly, that the identity of the source of grace may be extrapolated solely from the act of incarnation: God's saving action in Christ delineates the perimeters for our understanding of divine being. Both criteria are united in a series of sermons based upon Ephesians 1:2, "Grace to you and peace from our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." In these sermons, his focus is upon God's being as Father and Son, with specific stress upon the identity and status of the Son.

Irving approaches the divine mystery in a twofold manner: when arguing for the divine unity and equality of Father, Son and Spirit, his *apologia* aims to establish the divinity of the Son. The divinity of the Spirit stands or falls with that of the Son. In addition, the theological rule, *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*, enables Irving to clarify his basic premis. When establishing the plurality and individuality of the divine persons, he apportions each a specific activity within the overall indivisible divine economy. The unity of divine action *ad extra* highlights the distinction of divine being *ad intra*: God's being as Father, Son and Spirit, in unity and triunity, is reflected in the manner of divine operation. Conversely this unity of action distinguishes itself at the same time in a diversity of operation. Our knowledge of God's being corresponds to the way in which God makes himself known in and through Jesus Christ. This is a point of Irving's christology we shall return to in detail at a later point in our discussion of his doctrine of God.

In his sermons on Ephesians Irving focuses specifically upon the persons of Father and Son, for reasons both deductive and theological. Theologically, he wishes to affirm the self-effacing character of the Spirit.<sup>16</sup> In practice, however, it would appear self-defeating to investigate that which is ultimately 'self-effacing.' It is at this point that we confront a specific tension evident throughout Irving's work which results from three components: the personal, the metaphysical and the pneumatic. Firstly, Irving's inquiring mind is as concerned with the



dynamic by which his *credo* holds together as it is with its content. So, he seeks to give full expression to the reality of God's being-in-action. Secondly, he is concerned to harmonise God's-being-for-us with an adequately assuring soteriology. The means by which he attempts to solve this involves highlighting, thirdly, the character and action of the self-effacing Spirit of God. Irving expresses well the tension he recognises in embarking upon such a method:

And as it is a sign of infirmity and sickness to be talking about our health, and economising our powers of action, so it is a sign of weakness in the spirit to be talking about the Spirit and searching into His office, and feeling for His influence.. Nevertheless..it is also true that..the Holy Spirit bear(s) testimony of (himself) whenever (his) divine personality is called into question.<sup>17</sup>

Whether or not Irving is correct in this conclusion does not concern us here: what is of importance to note is the foundation he lays for future theological development. It is this foundational pneumatic component which subsequent commentators on Irving's christology have ignored, namely, the self-effacing role of the Spirit in any act of the Godhead. As a result, the significance of Irving's appreciation for the being and action of God the Spirit in creation, incarnation and redemption has been over-looked, with the more dramatic ecclesial and theologically naïve aspects of his christology blurring the theological depth to his thinking. However, before this may be meaningfully expressed, we must turn our attention first to the means by which Irving establishes the identity and divinity of the Son. Such a task introduces us to the hermeneutical problem implicit in the Church's christological debate, whether, "the divine that has appeared on earth and reunited man with God" is "identical with the supreme divine, which rules heaven and earth, or is...a demigod?"<sup>18</sup>

When we turn to his Trinity sermons, we find Irving applies himself to this debate by means of the Son's relation to the Father. He focuses particularly upon Ephesians 1:2 for therein he finds combined the notions of God's being *ad intra* alongside the grace made known to human beings in the divine economy. Moreover, the source of this grace, despite the plurality of persons, is unequivocally singular. If the grace itself is neither shared nor divided between the Father and Son, however, by what



means does it come into being?

Seeing that it is not in the way of share or division that the grace and peace cometh from these two Divine fountains, it must be in the way of passage or transition from the one to the other ..from God our Father to our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>19</sup>

For Irving, God the Father is the supreme subject of all divine action. But whilst God's being as Father is *causa sui sufficiens*, the sufficient cause of himself, he is neither individual nor independent. God as Father is related ontologically with God as Son. Thus the source of grace is neither divided nor independent: both the Father and the Son define the source of divine grace. Irving expresses the relation between Father and Son in a monarchical manner which becomes the hermeneutical key to unlock the problem of God's being as Trinity, setting in motion the dynamic and interpersonal identity of the one who identifies himself in this individuated unity. The Father is prior to yet equal with the Son.

I lay it down as the first principle in all sound theology that the fulness of the Father is poured into the Son, and returneth back through the Holy Spirit unto the Father, all creatures being by the Holy Spirit brought forth of the Son, in order to express a part of the Father's will and of His delight in His Son, which they do by union with the Son, promised through the Holy Ghost.<sup>20</sup>

It is this principle of causality which Irving uses to maintain the distinction he understands to exist between the Divine persons. His understanding of incarnation, wherein is revealed the filial obedience of the Son to the Father, enables Irving to interpret God's being as Father as the fulcrum by which we gain access to the mystery of divine being. Like Athanasius,<sup>21</sup> Irving affirms the divine identity and status of the Son from the affirmation of God as Father. It is this which is the major thrust of his *apologia*, with the secondary relationship between Son and Word threading itself throughout his argument. Both shall be examined separately for the sake of simplification and clarity. Our attention here focuses on the place Irving attributes to each in his analysis of God's being. However, this is not to suggest any attempt to explain away the *mysterium trinitatis*: although the Trinity is above reason, ultimately, it is not *against* it. Rather, his method reflects the overall goal of his thinking: the means by which God's grace is given to fallen human beings.



Consequently, before he presents the means by which this grace is made available, he sets his mind to establish, deductively, the equality of being that exists between the Father and Son.

### 2.1. The Son and the Word.

The function of language, for Irving, lies not in making a word work 'terribly hard' and rewarding it for so doing, but rather in the ease and precision by which a word expresses and illumines its predicate. Like Alice, he questions any extravagant claims attributed to particular words.<sup>22</sup> Rather, there is an intimate relation between language and thought, word and object. We see this most clearly in the way Irving stresses the intentional relation between *theologia* and *oikonomia*: what is the relevance of 'God-talk'? The answer for Irving, is derived from incarnation, from the economy of salvation. Throughout his Trinity sermons he argues from his understanding of and implications involved in incarnation. Therefore, his understanding of the dynamic of incarnation underlies his entire argument, moulding the concepts which finally express his understanding of God's being.

What, for instance, is the significance of God's being as 'Word' when applied to the second person of the Trinity? Because Irving derives the basis of his knowledge of God from God's gracious activity towards us in incarnation, he is adamant in his answer:

There could be no manifestation of the grace of God in the purpose of redemption from the simple knowledge of Christ as the Word.<sup>23</sup>

The being of God as Word fails to express the essential nature of the one who becomes known through Jesus Christ. It is unable to communicate the full import of what God does in Christ, and subsequently retards the soteriological implications Irving understands as implicit to any interpretation of divine being. Irving identifies two significant implications in holding to a purely Logos-christology. God's being as Word affords only the idea of will, and as such, bears no revelation of grace, which is the attribute of a person, not a mere will. Whilst Irving places



great stress on the notion of 'will,' as we shall have reason to note throughout the entire thesis, he consistently holds to a distinction between 'person' and 'will'. Consequently, the identification of Christ as God's Word can express at best only his ability to participate in and reveal the Father's will, in a manner similar to the way in which human words express the thoughts of the subject. However, in the same way that a word is not essentially related to the one from whom it proceeds, so the Word of God is not essentially related to nor capable of expressing its subject, the one from whom it proceeds.

How, therefore, can God's being as Son express that which his being as Word cannot? The answer lies in the place Irving accords to the notion of full and free love of one person to another. To identify Christ as Word is to identify him in a manner that is insufficient to express the relationality of God's being, not only *ad intra*, but also in his being-for-others. If the Word contains in itself the idea of one who shares in and expresses the Father's will, it is only by means of all that is inherent in the notion of Sonship, that there is inferred the notion of love.

The Word doth express His participation of all the Father's counsels, and His office in revealing them all: but the Son is that which expresseth His full possession of the Father's undivided affections, wrapping up in Himself all that love upon which the universe was to lean, as He wrapped up in his name of the Word all that wisdom by which the universe was to subsist. If it be an essential part of the eternal purpose of the Godhead revealed by Christ, that it contains the fulness of the Father's love in surrendering, as well as of the Father's wisdom in manifesting Christ, then I say that He who was surrendered must have been in the full possession of all the Father's love, as well as a sharer of all the Father's wisdom; or that He must have been Son as well as Word from all eternity. There is the same connexion between His office of Prophet in time and His personality of Word from eternity, as there is between His office of Saviour in time and of Son from eternity, - the one expressing a portion of the incommunicable wisdom of God which He was fraught withal; the other expressing a portion of the incommunicable love of God, whereof the fulness was poured into His single bosom, which can alone contain the ocean of it fulness.<sup>24</sup>

What is of importance to note here is the priority Irving gives to the idea of relatedness, and the subsequent relations involved. The givenness



of God's being transcends the mere capacity to communicate. God's being is in his relating. In as much as God's being as Word communicates only an impersonal form of relatedness, an impersonal God is unable to effect the personal redemption Irving understands to be the consequence of God's grace. Rather, it is only as Son that Christ receives the Father's love, and is subsequently able to make this love, rather than a bare will, known.<sup>25</sup>

## 2.2. The Son and the Father.

Irving has now established the first stage in his ontology: for the work of Christ to reveal anything more than the bare will of God, God's being-for-us must embrace both the creative capacity to communicate, as Word, as well as the capacity to love, as Son. This, however, is insufficient to establish the divine and equal status the Son shares with the Father. Consequently, Irving turns his attention to establishing the identity of the Son in his relation to the Father. In so doing, he seeks to highlight the intimate relationship the identity of the one has with the other.

### 2.2.1. The Son as Creature.

The problematic of God's being as Trinity implicates specific hermeneutical questions. If God's being is made known to us through a Son, is this Son identical with the 'supreme divine' or is he a 'demigod'? One historical and repetitive solution has been given in the Arian, Socinian and Unitarian notion that the Son is a creature.

The problem of God's creatureliness, for it is indeed a problem for those who confess an incarnated God, is addressed by Irving on soteriological grounds. If the Son is a creature, even the highest of all creatures, even that one through whom all others come into being, then Irving identifies three consequences. Firstly, any act of divine affection solely upon this one creature, which is not extended upon all creatures, rather than eliciting love and adoration, will excite "envy and disgust in all other creatures to behold God lavishing such excess fondness, and bestowing such amplitude of love upon one creature, and exalting him by such immeasurable



titles and unparalleled honours unto His own immediate presence and fellowship and blessedness...This Socinianism is the destruction and death of all confidence of the creatures towards God, and must of necessity beget distance and reserve when they behold such ravishment and blandishment upon one above the rest."<sup>26</sup>

Secondly, God's-being-as-creature, even as created Logos, is incapable of reflecting, on its own, the perfect and complete image of the invisible God. Whereas the Word may reveal the will from which it proceeds, as creature it is yet incapable of a complete revelation of God's will or mind. It affords only a visible creation, and a creaturely manifestation and understanding of that will. Fundamental to Irving's christology is the belief that nothing specifically created can reveal fully the work of its creator. The upshot of this, therefore, is that in ascribing mere creaturely existence to Christ, either as Word or as Son, the *mysterium trinitatis* of God's being continues to remain hidden. Thus Irving argues:

How can there be complete trust or assured love towards one whom we have no complete revelation of, I cannot conceive. I do not mean that it is necessary to comprehend God, in order to love Him and trust Him. You know how often I have exposed the profanity of such a thought as that we can comprehend God, or that He should be comprehensible..But if He is a creature that hath been manifested, then it is at best a work of God we have been contemplating, not God himself, who is still as much behind the veil as ever; and revelation is no revelation; and, in truth, there is no revelation made of God himself, but only of a creature of God.<sup>27</sup>

Thirdly, to claim that such a creature is commissioned by God for the purpose of revelation is of little consequence, for at best all that can be revealed is the creature's understanding of God: a comprehension that is finite, no matter how capacious the creature's abilities. Therefore, no matter how elevated is the status of the Son as creature, his ontic status remains creaturely. Consequently, Irving perceptively argues that if, "I am a piece of God's workmanship as well as he, (I) may teach him a lesson, as properly as he may teach me one. And the lesson I learn from him can in no wise obliterate the lesson I learn from myself. And if these disagree, then...I will cleave to my own intimate acquaintance with my dear self,



rather than to any message brought to me from afar by another, who is but a creature like myself."<sup>28</sup>

The significance of this point is not to be understated, for it represents a defiant contemporary, theological stand. Whilst prevailing theological methods were moving towards an anthropic centre of theological interpretation, Irving radicalised the theocentric in an attempt to hold together that which his contemporaries were rendering apart, namely, the doctrines of Christ and God's triune being. We shall deal with in detail one example of this contemporaneous difference in method in Part III of our thesis. However, the modernity of Irving's thought is revealed in his stress on the manner of revelation, for it anticipates more modern interpretations of the Trinity.<sup>29</sup> Although we have not reached a full explication of Irving's argument, we are already introduced to the ideas of the one who is Revealed and the Revealer. We now turn our attention to the manner by which he establishes the full divine status of the one who is the object of revelation.

#### 2.2.2. The Son as Divine.

Irving moves his argument to its final goal. God's being as Word, makes us privy solely to the bare will of God. It is only as God's being as Son that Christ establishes the full character of the being of God as Father. However, his argument, at this point, remains open to Arian, Socinian and Unitarian interpretations: that curious tautology which envisages the Son to be a 'divine creature.' It is now in our interest to delineate how Irving affirms the ontological status of the Son with the Father. This he explicates by means of a twofold rejection.

Firstly, he rejects the notion that, "Christ is a Divine person, the same in substance and equal in power and glory with the Father, but that he is not the Son from all eternity, but only from the day of his earthly generation, or from some higher date which is still in time."<sup>30</sup> He returns once again to his central premis: we gain no ontological description of God's being from such a concept. The relations of Fatherhood and Sonship remain circumstantial and accidental. If the Son is dependent upon an origin in



time for the purposes both of redemption and revelation, wherein lies any essential knowledge of God?

For when you say that Christ is not Son from eternity, you say that God is not a Father from eternity; and when you say that Christ is Son only with relation to the work of redemption, you say that God is Father only with relation to the same.<sup>31</sup>

Throughout his argument, Irving pushes his hermeneutic further in order to establish an ontological description of the persons of the Trinity which elucidates and accommodates the Christian Gospel. "If God be not known as Father, save to fallen men, nor Christ as Son, as what are they known?" Not as Will or Word, he continues, for although both are expressions of the Godhead, they reveal "no love or parental care, goodness, no grace, expressed by that mode of stating and apprehending the relation between the everlasting Persons."<sup>32</sup>

Fundamental to Irving's christology, therefore, is the belief that Jesus Christ is God's being as Son for us. However, Irving is not content to rest at this. His concern involves the grounds of sonship: how is he Son? By what manner does his Sonship consist? Having addressed the origin of the Son's existence within time, and found it insufficient to establish the idea of paternal love, Irving turns his attention to that notion he deems most subtle in its heterodoxy, namely that God's being as Son is derived "from the eternal purpose of God, in which He gave Himself as an offering for sin - in that it is not essential to Him as the eternal Word, but belongs to Him as party in the everlasting covenant and all inclusive purpose of God."<sup>33</sup> To the casual reader, this may appear to be theological hair-splitting! How can we talk of an eternal being who has a point of origin? Having thwarted the idea that the Son's origin is derived from a point in time, there still remains the need to clarify the exact manner of his eternal origination, as traditionally held by the Church catholic.

When we consider that Irving's single goal is to establish the full divinity of the Son with the Father in a manner consistent with the nature of salvation offered in the Christian Gospel, we see that he wrestles, in



this particular instance, with the most subtle of intrusions as he nears the end of his critical analysis of those notions he considers less than adequate to establish his goal. Here, he confronts the notion that the identity of Christ as Son of God is derived from his being as Word rather than from his relation to the Father. The subtle interpretation of the primacy of the Word over the Son, the office of the Son being a cognate of the Divine will, establishes the ultimate ground of being as that of 'will', rather than 'person'. To identify the Son in this manner is to preclude any essential union between Father and Son, for he does not originate from the being of God as Father, but from the eternal covenant of God with his creation. As such, the Son is not eternal with the Father, but an exalted creature.

Herein Irving opposes the arguments of his opponents. Only God's being as eternal and essential Son fulfils both the divine purpose of redemption and reveals to us the relation of love between Father and Son. Herein lies the significance in unlocking the mystery of divine being by the notion of 'grace:' "the greatness of the grace is according to the greatness of the love which was set aside."<sup>34</sup> Consequently, the status of Sonship must be essentially identical with that of Father.

His pre-existence as the Son of God is essential; his pre-existence as the Word is not sufficient to constitute the purpose as I find it written in all the Scriptures. For this purpose is not a purpose of will only, but it is a purpose of goodness, and of grace, and of mercy, and of bounty, - in one word, it is a purpose of love, according to the good pleasure of His will..Now the relation of Word..gives us no idea of love, but of will only; and without the revelation of Father and Son, we have not that idea. Wherefore it is absolutely necessary to the formation of a purpose which should contain the infinitude of all grace, that the Father should have known Christ as Son in the act of His origination, and loved Him with the fulness of the love of God, in order that, when He was surrendered in the purpose, we might be able to discern the fulness of the grace of God unto all creation.<sup>35</sup>

Finally, we arrive at the object of Irving's diallage, from which he delineates his theological perspective on the issues most pressing. Christ's identity as *Word* is insufficient to support a consistent doctrine of salvation. For God to be known as loving Father, Christ must be



identified as eternal Son, and not merely as Word: the former has priority over the latter. Only an eternal and essential generation of the Son from the Father establishes a divine status and meaning to the source of grace. Having defended his understanding of God's being as Father and Son, Irving is now at liberty to transcend the critical element in his *apologia*, and move towards constructing his own theological solution to the particular issues that have been raised. However, in order to highlight the significance of Irving's own solution, we turn to the earlier solution developed by the Cappadocian Fathers, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzus, which developed the Church's understanding of divine being in a manner that facilitated fuller appreciation of God's being as Spirit.

### 3. A Point of Comparison.

Since its origins the Christian faith has struggled to express adequately the very nature and character of divine being. Whilst editing and compiling the early oral traditions maintained by the first Christian communities, the Gospel writers felt no strain in presenting Jesus, the Christ, in terms of equality with the God he made known as Father. Neither did they shrink from suggesting, in less explicit terms, equal status to the one they knew and experienced as Spirit: one who was distinct from both the Father and Jesus. With casual ease, they held in tension both the belief that in Jesus the man, we meet the Divine Son, and the confession of one God who is known in the Christ-event as Father, Son and Comforter, or Spirit.

This casual synthesis of the 'one' and the 'many' continues in the Epistles, wherein there is reference in doxology, benediction, opening and closing pleasantries, to an accepted equality of divine persons. Yet at no time do these writers express any hint of presumption in declaring a monotheistic God of Persons.<sup>36</sup> It was, so to seem, the logical conclusion from the Church's experience of God. There was something about the Christian experience of God that circumlocuted this seeming paradox of combining the 'one' with the 'many.' The early Christian communities' experience of God



as Father, Son and Spirit long preceded any interpretation and explanation of the object of their experience and worship.

Such theological scrutiny was to become a major element of the Church's inheritance at the end of the apostolic era.<sup>37</sup> The epistemic necessity involved in establishing an adequate conceptualisation which would enable the faithful to affirm the unity and diversity of God's being, was dictated by the historic and geographical contexts within which the Church catholic found itself, both East and West. But it was in the East that the most refined form of the doctrine of God was to develop.

If that which creates History can ultimately be attributed to the *divine afflatus* - for who can teach great genius? what theory produces leaders? - then the emergence of the Cappadocian Fathers is to be understood as one historic moment moulding future theological thinking. Thus, it is to the Eastern trinitarian conception of God that we turn in order to highlight that which we shall in turn delineate from Irving's Trinity sermons. This in itself is an important point of method, for it is too easy to caricature differing theological expressions and pit the one against the other. Because of the different and developing traditions, of new contexts wherein questions and solutions are reviewed, reconsidered and reconstructed in order to make sense of both the Christian kerygma and its interpretations, whether theological or christological, the task of the theologian is to develop in harmony rather than develop by division that which is inherited. This is perhaps no more the case than when we consider the theological expressions which have greatly moulded trinitarian doctrine, whose development is not to be found in homogenised unity but in mysterious diversity. Thus Surin argues:

Within these developing contexts, the various trinitarian concepts were deployed heuristically, as dogmatic formulation advanced ..into the unknown. Clarity was sometimes achieved..but clarity, with its accompanying philosophical desiderata, coherence and logical rigour, were very much ideals to be reached for, rather than imposed willy nilly in contexts thought to be inappropriate. Hence, if two irreconcilable propositions each had something to warrant their acceptance, then both were likely to be retained as possible facets of some yet to be secured truth. We are left with the unbridgeable dichotomy between Eastern and Western trinitarianism. Now it cannot be gainsaid that there are times



when such historically-instituted theological dichotomies just have to be accepted by the contemporary theologian: our theological forebears, whether by design or inadvertance, shaped the theological agenda in *this* way rather than *that*, thereby constraining the present-day theological practitioner to operate with certain irreducible 'givens'. This, however, is simply not the case where the possible dichotomy between Eastern and Western trinitarianism is concerned. It must be acknowledged that tradition has given us two possible approaches to the mystery of the Trinity, both of which are perfectly orthodox, but which reflect undeniably different attitudes to the mystery.<sup>38</sup>

The Cappadocians were the inheritors of the Church's one truly ecumenical statement of faith, the Council of Nicea (325), and continued its empirical and inductive method.<sup>39</sup> They argued from the Christian experience of God as Father and Son to formulate their doctrine of God, which was to be vindicated at the Council of Constantinople, (381), doing so both empirically and analogically; the latter affirming the distinction between the Divine and the human, the former the belief that the Church's experience of God reveals something of the Divine Mystery.

The task fell to the Cappadocians to steer the Church through the Scylla of Jewish monotheism, and its Christian counterpart, Sabellianism, as well as the Charybdis of Greek polytheism, and its Christian counterpart, Arianism.<sup>40</sup> Their task was to avoid these two opposite theologies whilst expressing their own understanding in God's being as Trinity. In so doing, they were to finally arrive at a theology which was to prove "a bulwark both against Arian subordinationism and against Sabellian uni-personalism."<sup>41</sup>

The task fell to Basil of Caesarea to establish an adequate metaphysic within which to talk rationally of God as both 'one' and 'three' without implying either of the above dangers. This, however, involved no mere logical strategy, but ontology: the very ground of being. The task demanded a philological development that would facilitate talk of the one God which adequately embraced three persons.

In order to avoid Sabellianism, that the three persons are three roles of the one God, Basil sought for a way to speak of Father, Son and Spirit as



three full beings, rather than roles. However, 'person' or πρόσωπον, did not carry this meaning. Rather, it suggested 'role' or 'mask', lacking any ontological status. Consequently, Basil performed a major conceptual shift in order to establish an ontology that gave full being to the word 'person.' This he did by developing the metaphysic inherited from Athanasius who identified *hypostasis* (ὑπόστασις) with *ousia* (οὐσία), the implication being that a thing's concrete individuality (ὑπόστασις) means simply that it is, (i.e., its οὐσία). Basil sought to re-interpret 'person' and upgrade its significance. This he did by re-defining *hypostasis*. In so doing, firstly, he re-interpreted Athanasius and the current use of the word by aligning it with 'person.' Thus *hypostasis* took on a personal meaning gained from 'person,' and 'person' was up-graded in status by virtue of the ontological connotation *hypostasis* derived from *ousia*. Secondly, Basil laid to rest, by means of this common nature, the Origenistic notion of a mediatorial Logos, so that the Son could now be attributed an equal status with the Father.<sup>42</sup>

Christian orthodoxy was at last equipped with a linguistic framework which enabled it to embrace the notion of 'one' and 'many.' Sabellianism found its defeat in this process of re-definition. Subsequently, that which unites the Godhead is the common *ousia*; that which distinguishes the three persons are the individual *hypostases*.<sup>43</sup> Thus Basil states, both:

That of the proper nature no difference can be conceived as existing between one and the other, the peculiar characteristics shining, in community of essence, upon each.<sup>44</sup>

And:

If you ask me to state shortly my own view, I shall state that the *ousia* has the same relation to *hypostasis* as the common has to the particular. Every one of us both shares in existence by the common term of *essence* (*ousia*) and by his own properties is such an one and such an one. In the same manner...the term *ousia* is common, like goodness or Godhead, or any similar attribute; while *hypostasis* is contemplated in the special property of Fatherhood, Sonship, or the power to sanctify.<sup>45</sup>

Thus, states Kelly, the Cappadocians "analysed the conception of *hypostasis* more thoroughly than Athanasius...They were emphatic that the three *hypostases* share one and the same nature."<sup>46</sup> In countering Sabellianism,



they asserted that ontological priority does not reside with a 'God' who reveals himself in three separate roles, but to one who is Father, Son and Spirit, each of whom equally shares in the Divine nature in concrete, particular modes of being: Fatherhood, Sonship and Sanctification, or Father, Son and Spirit.<sup>47</sup> What unites them, both *theologically* and *oikonomically* is the commonly shared *ousia* and the unity of divine action respectively. It is to the latter that attention must now be paid in order to appreciate the Cappadocian polemic against both the Arian accusation of tritheism and the assertion that the Son is a creature.

In his *Theological Orations*, Gregory of Nazianzus argues for a very specific form of Monarchianism. Dismissing the ideas of Anarchia and Polyarchia as chaotic and disorderly, he states:

Monarchy is that which we hold in honour. It is, however, a Monarchy that is not limited to one Person..Unity having from all eternity arrived by motion at Duality, found rest in Trinity. This is what we mean by Father and Son and Holy Ghost. The Father is the begetter and the Emitter: without passion..and without reference to time, and not in a corporal manner. The Son is the Begotten, and the Holy Ghost the Emission..let us confine ourselves within our limits, and speak of the Unbegotten and the Begotten and that which proceeds from the Father.<sup>48</sup>

For the Cappadocians, the particularising characteristics of each person of the Trinity is his "manner of coming to be,"<sup>49</sup> (τρόπος τῆς ὑπάρξεως). This they explained in terms of Monarchia, wherein lay the distinctions between each of the persons; the particular characteristic of the Father being that he is both unbegotten and the 'cause' (ἀρχή) of both the Son and Spirit, the particular characteristic of the Son being begotten of the Father, whilst that of the Spirit being his procession from the Father. Due to the fact that these names represented the *idiomata* or *hypostases*, and not the *ousia*, the Cappadocians were able to ascribe the idea of a *monarchia*, a causality to the Trinity without implying ontological subordinationism. Thus, they could accord the idea of begottenness to the Son without implying creatureliness.

This idea of causality was grounded in the Christian experience of God; our knowledge of the unity of God is derived *oikonomically*, from the unity



of divine action - a *single* co-operating activity of the entire Trinity derived from a unity of Divine will.

We do not learn that the Father does something on his own, in which the Son does not co-operate. Or again, that the Son acts on his own without the Spirit. Rather does every operation which extends from God to creation and is designated according to our differing conceptions of it have its origin in the Father, proceed through the Son, and reach its completion in the Holy Spirit. It is for this reason that the word for the operation is not divided among the persons involved. For the action of each in any matter is not separate and individualized. But what ever occurs, whether in reference to God's providence for us or to the government and constitution of the universe, occurs through the three Persons, and is not three separate things.<sup>50</sup>

### 3.1. The Cappadocians and the Spirit.

Arianism challenged the fourth-century church to clarify its teaching on the Spirit. Whilst the threat from Sabellianism was met in asserting that the Spirit has his own *τρόπος ὑπάρξεως*, the Church's new task was to define both the status and particularity of the Spirit against the Arian Trinity of "three infinitely dissimilar essences (*οὐσίαι ἀνόμοιοι ἐν ἁπείρῳ*).<sup>51</sup>

Basil attributed equal worship to the Father, Son and Spirit. From the unity of operation, he argued for the "invariability of nature."<sup>52</sup> However, he never claimed the Spirit was God or consubstantial with the Father.<sup>53</sup> This was to be developed by the two Gregories. Gregory of Nyssa asserted the particularity of the Spirit: the Spirit receives his identity from the Father who is, hypostatically, the cause (*τὸ αἷτιον*) of both the Son and the Spirit. The Spirit, consequently, receives his identity from the Father, through the Son.<sup>54</sup> Whilst Gregory does call the Spirit *θεός*, he never describes the Spirit as *ὁμοούσιον τῷ Πατρί*. It was Gregory of Nazianzus who openly declared the consubstantiality of the Spirit with the Father, asserting the full divinity of the Spirit.

What then? Is the Spirit God? Most certainly. Well then, is He Consubstantial? Yes, if He is God.<sup>55</sup>

The doctrine of God as Trinity now reached its zenith in this fullest of conceptual presentations. In true systematic form, Gregory explained the



late arrival onto the theological scene of the Spirit's divinity thus:

The Old Testament proclaimed the Father openly, and the Son more obscurely. The New manifested the Son, and suggested the Deity of the Spirit. Now the Spirit Himself dwells among us and supplies us with a clearer demonstration of Himself. For it was not safe, when the Godhead of the Father was not yet acknowledged, plainly to proclaim the Son; nor when that of the Son was not yet received to burden us further..with the Holy Ghost.<sup>56</sup>

### 3.2. A Progression in Thought.

Like a mobile which moves only in relation to the wind blowing against it, so is the ongoing task of 'trinitarian' theology: its content, like the mobile, remains constant moving only insofar as is required to answer the questions thrown up by each subsequent *Zeitgeist*.<sup>57</sup> By means of the highly refined conceptual tools of *ousia* and *hypostasis*, the Cappadocians facilitated a theological construction which expressed belief in a God who is both one and many. The historical context within which their problematic arose, however, is far removed from that of Irving's. Although the problematic which both addressed was similar, (for *theology*, like *history*, does indeed repeat itself), the manner by which each addressed their data highlights and in turn facilitates the ultimate expression they give to the identity of God as Trinity.

God's being as Father is identified in terms of monarchy and causality within the Godhead. He is the *fons trinitatis*: the 'source' and 'cause' from which the Son and the Spirit proceed. The unity of God's being is safeguarded by the fact that the Father is the only one of the Trinity who is 'self-originated.' His identity as Father is the "fundamental principle of the Trinity...His single prerogative, His precedence in being, though not in time."<sup>58</sup> He derives his identity from the fact that he has no origin. He alone is self-originated. Conversely, the common attribute of self-existency shared by Father, Son and Spirit, safeguards the doctrine of the Trinity.



However, for Irving, the Father is also identified as the 'abysmal Will,' the 'primary founder' out of whom "all things are and by whom we are."<sup>59</sup> We noted that throughout his argument, Irving has been at pains to safeguard against the notion that the grounds of being consists of an impersonal and unidentified Will: the history of humanity is identified with God's history - the practical expression, not of brute will, but of a loving, paternal will. In a later sermon, '*The Theology of the Natural Man*,' he argues against the Romantic notion of an intelligent Creator or Superior Being derived from scientific observations of creation. This 'primary founder' which Irving talks of is not to be identified with the idea of God as power or sovereignty, for such talk is insufficient to the notion of a personal God. No provision is made in his theology for the notion of a *vestigium trinitatis*.

Now, supposing them to have made this step from the visible creation to an intelligent Creator, and that they did habitually, upon beholding nature, connect her forms and changes with a superior Being, they are still remote from any apprehension of the Christian's God, and incapable of those affection which we feel towards the God who is revealed in the Holy Scriptures. They have evidences of immeasurable power; but power doth not beget love..Whoever fastens upon God' attribute of sovereignty or power, and placeth that chiefly before his eyes, becomes a timorous devotee, a superstitious, feeble slave.<sup>60</sup>

God's being as Father leads us to consider the particular identity Irving ascribes the Son, and in particular, the ontical identification he ascribes to the Son. The Cappadocians identified the particular τρόπος υπάρξεως of the Son in terms of his being begotten of the Father. Irving, however, seeks to delineate the implications involved in talking of an eternal relationship between Father and Son. This he extrapolates from the New Testament notion that the Son is the express image of the Father.

Concerning the mystery of the eternal generation of the Son in the bosom of the Father, God forbid that I should speculate, or even venture to think that I can comprehend it, or that I would liken it to anything in the heaven above or in the earth below. While I reverently contemplate it, and meditate upon it as as mystery of the Divine Being hid within Himself, and receive it implicitly as a matter of divine faith, revealed for our knowledge of God, and comfort and delight in Him, all that I would attempt in discoursing thereof would be to shew unto His Church the streams of consolation and grace which flow from this most secret and mysterious fountain..The knowledge that the first



act of the Godhead was to generate a Son in His own image and likeness, who should contain the fulness of Himself, and dwell within Himself the object of all His delight, is such a proof of fellowship and communion and divine affection, as should fill every creature with trust and confidence, and assure our hearts before Him.<sup>61</sup>

It is not in our purpose to extrapolate from this the various implications of Irving's thought. Rather, what is of importance to note is the manner in which he remains consistent with his own Scottish, theological tradition, which Barth identifies as the balance between the *Majesty* of God and the *Person* of God.<sup>62</sup> The *Majesty* of God remains an ultimate mystery; the human mind lacks capacity to fully comprehend the incomprehensible and infinite. However, Irving differs from the Eastern fathers in that he resists any philosophical speculation in order to establish the identity of God's being. Secondly, and following on from this, is Irving's insistence that the Father chooses to reflect, or image, himself in and through his Son. The eternal generation of the Son, subsequently, becomes identified not with a bare, omnipotent will, but, rather with the loving will of the Father. The Son's generation consists 'in His being, then, the object of all affection, and delight, unto the Father before the world was.'<sup>63</sup>

Hitherto in his apologetic, Irving's use of both the Fatherhood of God and the Son's eternal generation from the Father reflects his dependence upon the theological tradition within which he trained. Only once does he suggest an element of independence which could be deemed specifically innovative. This we have highlighted in the place he attributes to the Trinity in his thought. Whereas the Cappadocians arrived at the divine status of the Son by means of linguistic conceptuality in distinguishing between *ousia* and *hypostasis*, Irving pursues the same goal without such linguistic dexterity.

Irving extrapolates the divine status of the Son both in paternal and soteriological terms. The one who comes to us in saving grace is also the bearer of the Father's grace. Therefore, there is an intimate relation between what Irving identifies as the filial and soteriological identity of Christ. If the Cappadocian *apologia* was abstracted from any explicit soteriological implications, then Irving's is a complete reversal in



theological method, as we have noted above. The Cappadocians, despite their remonstrations to the contrary, treated data about God as *primary data* which could be treated as an object of investigation over against oneself. Irving, however, consistently treats such data as *secondary data* contingent upon the context within which human beings find themselves:<sup>64</sup> God's trinitarian being is intimately associated with his saving action. Consequently, as we turn to consider the manner by which Irving delineates his understanding of God's being as Spirit in relation to that of Father and Son, we confront an innovation that moves away from the conceptual method for expressing divine being of the Cappadocians, to one that draws more heavily upon the specific relation of the Spirit.

#### 4. Irving and the Spirit.

However much we may agree in sentiment with Mackey's remark that "*trinitarian* theology stands or falls with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit,"<sup>65</sup> we must add that the degree to which it stands or falls is contingent upon the specific identity given to the Spirit. The doctrine of the Spirit remains the Achilles' heel of trinitarian thought. With Gregory Nazianzus' triumph in systematising most fully Cappadocian thought, the Spirit's role in the divine economy came to be interpreted via fourth century theistic presuppositions.<sup>66</sup> Consequently, we take leave of our Cappadocian comparison, and turn our attention to the first of Irving's major innovations within his own western tradition.

What does it mean to affirm God's being as Spirit? In what way does his being Spirit increase our knowledge of the transcendent and divine mystery? Herein lies the hermeneutical problem of trinitarian theology. The God who identifies himself as Father and Son, is further differentiated as Spirit. But whilst we are able to comprehend the analagous relations of Father and Son, that of Spirit is more evasive in that it is less self-explanatory. Ecclesial and dogmatic history repeats itself in consistently succumbing to the danger of treating God's being as Spirit both independent from and consequential to that of Father and Son. To various degrees, the Spirit becomes an appendage to any trinitarian 'God-talk.'



Irving's solution to the trinitarian problematic does not remove God's being from the existential and practical needs of the Church. Rather, he contests that our knowledge of God's being cannot be divorced from the Christian experience of God in Christ and in the Church. Therefore the identity of the Spirit is not abstracted from what we perceive in Christ both in incarnation and in salvation, and experience in Christian worship. However, this is not to infer an identification of the *economic* Trinity with the *immanent* Trinity. God's being ultimately remains a *mysterium trinitatis*. This is not to affirm, however, that the Godhead is mysterious. Our knowledge of God as Father, Son and Spirit is derived from God's gracious activity towards fallen humanity. To this degree, God's being is in God's becoming - he makes himself known in his action towards us.<sup>67</sup> For Irving, the triune being of God is in harmony with the Christian experience of God.

What is of interest when we analyse Irving's understanding of God's-being-for-himself, is his uninterest in any philosophical expression of the unity of God. His monotheistic trinitarianism is obviously founded upon a notion of the oneness of God's being. Although he alludes to the notion of a common divine 'substance' in fact it is always in the background of his thinking. Irving's concern is at all times with the personal relations between Father, Son and Spirit in incarnation and redemption. As a result, his doctrine of God as Trinity is less abstract than the Cappadocians, for he elucidates his understanding of the Trinity from his perception of the biblical data. His soteriological concerns press him to consider the threefold relations of the Godhead in incarnation. As a result, he refers very little to 'substantial' language, preferring to pursue what is an explicitly relational unity. The ultimate grounds of being is not defined by any substantial category. *Deus est ens super ens* only as Father, Son and Spirit.

The Cappadocians attempted to solve the trinitarian problematic regarding the unity of divine being by means of the aforementioned distinction between *ousia* and *hypostasis*. The result was to present the unity of God in a manner distinct from the biblical presentation of Father, Son and Spirit. The unity of God's being came to be expressed in mainly



substantial terms. Irving, however, is at pains to show that God's being is in God's relating: not merely in his subsisting, but in his self-relating. Not only so, but that the manner of relating is specifically pneumatic. The God who differentiates himself as Father and Son does so specifically through his being as Spirit. Herein lies Irving's solution to the trinitarian problematic. The hermeneutical problem of *trinitarian* 'God-talk' is given a relational and, in particular, *pneumatological* solution.

Although we find in Irving's vocabulary the notion of 'substance,' it assumes a quite different meaning from its traditional use: it denotes the common characteristics shared by Father, Son and Spirit - grace, love, justice, mercy, omnipotence. Indeed, Irving's understanding of the term confounds any parallel identification with Cappadocian usage. His use of 'substance' parallels that of the Cappadocian '*hypostasis*.'

If any one ask a Christian what is the name of his God, he doth not answer well unless he say, "The Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost." And when in blessing we do say..."The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all," we use that word God in connexion with the Father, not to signify that He only is God, but to signify His Divine substance; just as for the same reason we use the title Lord Jesus Christ unto Jesus, and the title the Holy unto the Spirit.<sup>68</sup>

It is not our purpose to determine whether or not this divergence came about through ignorance of the historical distinction between the substance and persons of the Godhead. Of greater importance is whether Irving's mind is sufficiently capacious to state concisely and straightforwardly a theological perspective which, once having re-orientated the traditional means by which the Church has maintained its belief in the unity of Father, Son and Spirit, is able to achieve the same goal.

Irving's answer turns specifically on the belief that God's being is in his relating, which Irving delineates in terms of Father and Son whose relation establishes and facilitates the notion of love. In so doing, he moves away from his western tradition which appropriates the title of 'Love' to the Spirit. Whilst Augustine suggested that if any of the Trinity "be



specifically called love, what more fitting than that this should be the Holy Spirit...The Holy Spirit is specifically called love,"<sup>69</sup> it was Richard of St. Victor who developed with great insight God's being as Spirit as that which represents the overflow of the love between the Father and the Son. The Spirit is realised as the one whose existence it is within the Trinity to perfect the divine love.<sup>70</sup> It is interesting to note that here again, we meet a philosophically deduced interpretation of God's being as Spirit, for although Richard is at pains to develop a biblical perception of divine being as Love, the manner by which he attributes this to the Spirit reflects more his deductive rather than scriptural presuppositions.

When we turn to consider Irving's perception of God's being as Love, we discover that he applies the notion of love within the divine relations not to the Spirit but to the Father and Son, and in particular to the Son as the one who is the image of the Father's loving will. Thus he rejects the idea of identifying the Spirit as Love, on the grounds that "we have no such expression as the Father loving the Holy Spirit, or the Son loving the Holy Spirit - the love being always from the Father to the Son, and terminating in the Son."<sup>71</sup>

How, therefore, does he identify God's being as Spirit? More importantly within a *trinitarian* apologetic, if he misunderstands, or deliberately rejects, the notion of a unifying, divine substance, wherein lies that which safeguards his doctrine of God from the charge of tritheism? It is at this point that we are introduced to the corner-stone of his entire ontology. He continues the western stress in identifying the Spirit in terms of procession, whilst also seeking to identify the implications involved in this assertion. Like generation, procession implies both "the idea of the originating will of another, and self-existence (not creature-existence) in that which is originated." Irving has used the idea of generation to imply "the most perfect love in him who begetteth, and the most perfect likeness in him who is begotten." However, in relation to that which Irving believed to be implicit to the Christian Gospel, such an expression falls short of the Christian experience of God, both in scriptural and personal attestation. Herein we meet the complementary and necessary role the Spirit plays within the divine community. God's being



as Spirit, as the one who proceeds, "implies a full and fixed purpose in him from whom the procession is, and an active obedience and complete power of fulfillment in him who proceedeth."<sup>72</sup> As such, the Spirit is differentiated from the Father, who is self-originated, and from the Son, who is generated and images the Father's love. The Spirit, as we have noted earlier, is further distinguished from the Son in that it is only in the filial and paternal divine relations that we are introduced to God's love.

Inasmuch as God's being as Spirit is distinguished in the act of procession, we continue to 'see in a glass dimly.' There is no immediate analogy by which we can interpret this particularising identity. Herein lies the 'self-effacing' nature of the Spirit: an implicit resistance to any thoroughly explicit identity. He is God's being in his 'other-self-being': both God's being as relating for the Other and God's being relating to the Other. For Irving, God's being *ad extra*, in his creatureliness throughout the Christ-event, is the criterion by which we identify his being *ad intra*. If the purpose of creation and redemption "revealeth the activity and the power of the Holy Ghost to shew forth and outwardly realise...those correlative affections which existed in the Father and the Son, or, in Scripture language, to testify of the Father and the Son," then "this procession of the Holy Ghost from the Father and the Son, and love to manifest their being, must have been in existence before the purpose to reveal the same could be formed."<sup>73</sup>

Thus far Irving has not generated any significant development within his theological tradition. This he develops in the manner by which he attributes to the Spirit a unifying relation within the divine community. We have already noted that Irving accords personal, though not ontological, priority to the Father. Traditionally this *monarchia* has been accommodated alongside the equality of essence shared by each of the divine persons. Consequently, God's being is both substantial and relational. In the history of dogmatic expression, however, the former has emerged as the more dominant tool in expressing divine unity. Irving, however, moves away from this substantial priority to develop a more personal and relational understanding of divine unity.



In the sublime exordium of the Gospel by John, it is said of the Word that He was with God, and that He was God, and that He came forth from the bosom of God: and in Colossians, it is said that it pleased the Father that in Him all fulness should dwell: expressions these which convey in the strongest terms the diversity of persons in the Godhead, the subordination of place in the unity of substance, between these two, the Father and the Son. But this unity of substance between two divers persons can only be maintained, even in idea, by the existence of a third person, who shall be the bond of that union. If the Father in His own personality were to speak or to do anything to the Son to the end of His coming into the bounds of the Christ, or if He were to express or shew forth any affection to Him, in that subsistence, then doth the Father himself come within the limits thereof, and unlimitable infinite Godhead ceases to be the inalienable property of the Father.<sup>74</sup>

In this we confront the means by which he developes his theological inheritance in order to relate to the issues he saw as being most pressing. The very unity of divine being implicates more than two persons. In this sense, Irving parallels the logic of Richard St. Victor, but differs in that whilst the latter argued for the Spirit's existence in order to substantiate the quality of divine love, the former does so in order to substantiate the grounds of divine self-relating. If God's being is his self-relating, then it is a self-relating that operates in a specifically *pneumatological* manner.

As the Father doth, in the primeval and one only complete act of His will, generate the Son, in whom are included, and through whom are operated, all the various particular acts thereof; so from the Father and the Son, in their harmonious union, proceedeth the Holy Ghost; through whom, before creation, in the depths of eternity, the Son expresseth unto the Father the perfect unity of His being, notwithstanding that distinctness of personality which He had bestowed upon Him. The self-existence of the Son, and the self-existence of the Father would constitute them twain in existence, as well as in personality, were it not for the procession of the Holy Ghost from both in whose self-existing intercommunion they behold, and are satisfied, with their oneness. The Spirit being originated both from the Father and the Son, must in His self-existent being represent the unity and harmony of these two self-existent Beings.<sup>75</sup>

The unity of God's *trinitarian* being is communicated neither in any abstracted manner, nor in the relation between primary and secondary



substance, of *ousia* and *hypostasis*, nor in any psychological analogies derived from self-reflection. The unity of God's-being-for-himself is radicalised by the paradoxical triune character of God's-being-for-himself. The Achilles' heel of trinitarian theology becomes the very corner-stone to Irving's entire ontology. It is a *personal* and thoroughly Pneumatic union. The primacy of the Father's will in generating the Son is not that which causes the Spirit's procession. The Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son. In order to so establish his point, as one implicit to his ontology, Irving returns to the key principle within his hermeneutic at this point, and one similar to that of Barth: "the reality of God which encounters us in His revelation is His reality in all the depths of eternity."<sup>76</sup> Irving takes the *Filioque* most seriously because of its givenness within the Christian story. That which we know of God's being as Spirit is that which we 'encounter' in the divine revelation. The *ontological* identity of the Spirit is harmonious with his functional identity given to us through the written and incarnate Word.

By going forth to set on foot any mighty work, and creating the elemental life of it, He doth thereby, in working his own personal and distinct work, so far forth express their unity and oneness of substance; while by staying at a certain point, and confessing His inability to proceed further, He doth give honour to the superior place, and room for the independent self-sufficiency of the Son: who now cometh forth, whether as Word, or as the only-begotten Son, (for He is both from all eternity in His very substance,) to give forms, and functions, and laws of being: yet all the while declaring that He can work nothing by Himself, nor put will into anything, being Himself but the great offspring of the Father's will, for the decree of which every work waiteth, and without which no work of the Godhead is complete. And the work being complete doth acknowledge the origination of its life to the Spirit, the excellent form and peculiar blessedness of its life to the Son, the end and continual support of its life to the Father's will.<sup>77</sup>

Who is God-in-his-being-for-himself? He is the one who reveals himself through his being-for-others. Irving maintains an essential harmony in the manner by which the economic Trinity reveals to us the immanent Trinity. The economic *Filioque* "expresses recognition of the communion between the Father and the Son."<sup>78</sup> However, unlike Barth, this communion is not one of love. (This, Irving has attributed previously to the relationship between the Father and Son: the latter specifically identified



as Love within the Trinity). The economic *Filioque* reveals the immanent *Filioque*. It expresses that which was attributed, in the tradition of dogmatics, to the notion of the commonly shared divine substance. It is not by the latter that we come to recognise the divine unity. Rather, the unity of God's being-for-himself is derived from the immanent relation the Spirit has with both the Father and the Son. He is both *ex Patre* and *Filioque* in such a manner that the ultimate grounds of being is understood not merely as *multi-personal*, but much more significantly, as *uni-personal*: God's being is in his personal self-relating. Thus the essential union between Father, Son and Spirit categorises the meaning of 'person.' It is a meaning derived from the economic Trinity revealed in incarnation. Consequently, the *trinitarian* and *christological* meaning of 'person,' reveals the significance of our own human personhood, not vice-versa: the term 'person' owes its meaning to christology in its 'metaphysical foundation'.<sup>79</sup>

This is, indeed, an innovative development of dormant theological threads within his own trinitarian tradition. However, this should not be isolated merely to Irving's western context. We turn again to our Cappadocian comparison in order to highlight the ongoing and creative, theological development in the East with regards that which was initiated by Basil and the two Gregories.

Basil maintained that the Spirit is not a creation of the Father nor of a different nature from the Father. Anastos points out the Basil insisted that "the Holy Spirit has a kinship (οἰκεῖωσιν) with the Father and Son.. that the Spirit is holy, good, a bestower of special spiritual gifts (such as sonship of God and the immortality of the body), and one which shares in divinity." However, Basil "was reluctant to go beyond recognizing that the Holy Spirit was θεῖον or making the tortuous argument that, since baptism is performed in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and is a seal of faith, faith...is a recognition of the divinity [of each of them.]"<sup>80</sup> Thus, Basil himself states that the Council of Nicea deferred comment because "at the time of the Council, no question was mooted, and the opinion of this subject in the hearts of the faithful was exposed no attack."<sup>81</sup> It was the threat from Arianism that brought this



to the foreground. However, Basil remains silent on the overall identity of the divine Spirit.

Whilst Gregory of Nazianzus defends Basil's silence in terms of his desire not to alienate him from the wavering,<sup>82</sup> as well as on technical grounds, affirming that Basil's terminology is not to be considered as "the utmost limit of truth,"<sup>83</sup> more modern scholars vary in their testimony to Basil. A. Meredith argues negatively that Basil's caution in ascribing equal honour to the Spirit is not an "eirenic gesture" nor an example of his "economy," but due to his "imperfect (or barely existent) awareness of the role played by the Holy Spirit in the work of creation."<sup>84</sup>

Those who defend him, argue that Basil was unwilling to disrupt an already fragile Church, therefore, he withstood the pressure to affirm any explicit statements about the Spirit's divinity, although the substance of his writings suggests the Spirit to be God.<sup>85</sup> According to J. D. Zizioulas, Basil is following the Cappadocian line of argument: substance language was only used when comparing God and the world: God is one substance, the world another. It is used in the Father-Son debate to indicate that the Son is not a creature, but God. Thus, he argues: "when substantialist language is taken out of the created-uncreated dialectic and is turned into a ground of divine metaphysics, it is taken away from its original context."<sup>86</sup> However, Gregory of Nazianzus' affirmation of the Spirit's consubstantiality with the Father appears to make little reference to the Creator-created debate, thus seriously weakening Zizioulas' argument.

In *Being as Communion*, J.D. Zizioulas argues for a particular interpretation of Cappadocian ontology. He argues that Basil, in re-defining "person," introduces a new philosophical concept; a fact the history of philosophy has not noted. No longer is 'substance' the ultimate principle of being: this ultimacy is now accorded to 'person.' For the Cappadocians, the ultimate ontological principle becomes 'person' and specifically, the Person of the Father who causes, by a free act of his being, both the Son and the Spirit. Consequently, the Trinity is derived not from a substance, but a person, the Father - "what therefore is important in trinitarian theology is that God "exists" on account of a person, the Father, and not on account



of a substance."<sup>87</sup> From this person, by a free and personal act, are caused the Son and the Spirit. The Father, for Zizioulas, becomes the cause of the Persons of the Trinity, and as such, the being of God resides in communion with the Father, not the Divine substance: "Communion arises from the person of the Father, not the substance of God. It is the Father as divine person, and not the divine nature that is ecstatic."<sup>88</sup>

Zizioulas' interpretation is both illuminating and refreshing, and possibly permissible within an Orthodox hermeneutic, wherein he is interpreted as expanding upon the tradition he inherits. However, does he present what the Cappadocians themselves argue? It would appear not, for the Cappadocians held in tension both the substantial and the personal, doing so in order to confound both Sabellianism and Arianism, as well as its extreme form, Eunomianism which identified the substance of God with the Father, attributing a lower form of existence to the Son. To reject the efficacy of substantial language in their own method of argument is to undermine a bulwark established by them to defend rational talk of God as a Trinity of Persons against these misrepresentations of the Christian doctrine of God. The *substance* of God is a fundamental category within their ontology.

Secondly, all three Cappadocians argue quite unequivocally for a communion of divine substance, not persons, as Zizioulas argues. This, Gregory of Nazianzus states in a most succinct and representative manner when he states that "the Father is not a name either of an essence or of an action...But it is the name of the Relation in which the Father stands to the Son, and the Son to the Father."<sup>89</sup>

Thirdly, Gregory of Nyssa argues for a distinction in person and nature vis-à-vis causality. "Although we acknowledge the nature is undifferentiated, we do not deny a distinction with respect to causality. That is the only way by which we distinguish one Person from the other, by believing...that one is the cause and the other depends on the cause...When we speak of a cause and that which depends on it, we do not, by these words refer to nature. For no one would hold that cause and nature are identical."<sup>90</sup> It is because all three modes of existence, Father, Son and



Spirit, fully possess the one, full divine nature, that the Cappadocians can safely talk of a monarchia and causality from the Father without inferring any ontological subordination.

When we compare this, the hitherto greatest theological expression of the divine identity given by the Cappadocians with that of Irving we find both similarities and differences. On the one hand, Irving's interest in and stress on the divine *relations* parallels that which we see in Cappadocian theology, and whilst it can hardly be said that such a stress is missing in western theology, for we have noted it in Richard of St. Victor, Irving's emphasis appears to be much more at home within the theological tradition expressed both by Cappadocian thought and its progression in Zizioulas.

However, on the other hand, Irving's doctrine of God differs significantly and specifically from the Cappadocians by virtue of its pneumatic dimension. The Cappadocians' philological development established the specific identity of the Spirit: the Spirit is Divine; not so much in his relational being-in-event, but in terms of his substantial being-in-divinity. Herein lies the significance of Irving's contribution to the *trinitarian* problematic: he refuses to acknowledge a radical distinction between the reality of God's being-for-himself and that reality which owes its existence to God's-being-in-action. The Cappadocians maintained a clear distinction between the two by means of the *apophatic* character of God's being. Irving argues conversely. God's being is understood from the perspective of *event*, incarnation, wherein is highlighted the Spirit's relation to the Father and Son. It is therefore, from the event of incarnation that Irving delineates his understanding of the divine relations. Whilst God's-being-for-himself is finally a mystery 'hid within Himself,' the act of God's self-revelation through the Christ-event illuminates the *mysterium trinitatis*. The relations between Father, Son and Spirit *ad extra* adequately signify those hidden *ad intra*. "God reveals himself as Father, Son and Spirit because he is God as Father, Son and Spirit."<sup>91</sup> On this basis, Irving identifies the *Spirit* as the *vinculum unitatis*: the uniting link within the Trinity. Our comprehension of Father, Son and Spirit as God's being-for-himself, as God's self-relating, is intrinsic to the Spirit's specific relation within the divine community. As



the Father is dependent upon the Son for his own being, and vice-versa, both are incomprehensible in their *trinitarian* being apart from the Spirit, who, in turn, is understood only in his specific relation with Father and Son.

Nevertheless, God is no object of theoretical speculation: theological talk about God remains *iconic*, or, what Polanyi calls '*inarticulate*' knowledge.<sup>92</sup> Although knowledge of divine being is derived from the perspective of incarnation, this knowledge is a *given*. Our knowledge of God's being for himself and for others, comes to us in an act of grace: that which he has done in and through Jesus Christ. Consequently, although Irving proceeds with caution, this does not imply we are left to grope in the dark in a confused and meaningless manner. He insists upon a clear distinction between the subject of revelation and the means of revelation. Thus, our articulation of any knowledge about God's being is derived not from any state of self-consciousness, but from the transcendent moment in human, finite history when the infinite and divine became enfleshed within time. But the derivation of such knowledge, in turn, has no anthropic source: it is thoroughly *pneumatological*. Thus the believing community of the faithful invoke: "Per te sciamus de PATREM noscamus atque FILIUM: Te UTRIUSQUE SPIRITUM credamus omni tempore. Grant that we may know the Father and the Son through thee: and that we may believe Thee, the Spirit of both at all times."

##### 5. The Means of Grace.

Einziger, ewiger  
allgegenwärtiger  
unsichtbarer  
und unvorstellbarer Gott!

Andere gibt es nur im Menschen,  
nur in der Vorstellung.  
In ihr hat der Allgegenwärtige nicht  
Raum.

Ist er niemals zu sehn?

Ist er ewig unsichtbar?

Wie? Dein allmächtiger Gott

Kann sich uns nicht sichtbar machen?<sup>93</sup>

The question of God's being, his existence and identity, is surely as problematic now, as it was for Schønberg's Moses. If God is "indefinable because invisible, and unobservable, and unbounded, and eternal, and all pervading,"<sup>94</sup> then is not all 'God-talk' merely the Cheshire cat of ingenious theology? Are we not forced to halt at the final words attributed, by Schønberg, to Moses?

So war alles Wahnsinn,  
was ich gedacht habe,  
und kann und darf nicht gesagt  
werden!

O Wort, du Wort, das mir fehlt!<sup>95</sup>

There has been no more succinct Christian reply than that given by St. John in his prologue: this Word became flesh, the filial expression of God's innermost being as Father. It is he who expresses the unspoken Word. This is no *Deus absconditus*, herein lies the *Deus revelatus*. "No one has ever seen God: the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known."<sup>96</sup> The silence is shattered by divine *fiat*: the Johannine Son diffuses the darkness with dawning light. The indefinable, unobservable, unbounded and eternal becomes visible in the Son. By no other means do we comprehend the infinite and eternal attributed to God. This fundamental element of Johannine theology becomes the foundation for Irving's entire ontology. Undergirding his entire doctrine of God is the belief that, "through Christ, and Christ only, who is the Godhead in a body, could the Godhead out of a body, the infinite and invisible Godhead, ever have been known..God is known by His acts...We come by the knowledge of the invisible Godhead of the Father, through the visible Godhead of the Son."<sup>97</sup>

However, Irving has argued already that God's creative action reveals no personal attribute of his being. Otherwise, the unity of God's being would



be deduced in a manner similar to that which Irving opposed in the Unitarians and Deists. Consequently, although there has been little doubt with regards the unity of God's being within and outwith the Church, Irving maintains a very clear distinction between the unity held by the Church and that propounded by his secular contemporaries. Theirs is a false God: 'a certain idea of perfect being and infinite power which they have from their own brain, an abstraction of certain properties of man, a generalisation of certain principles of matter, "a great first cause least understood," an all-pervading power, and everything or anything but the true, self-existing, personal God.'<sup>98</sup>

Nevertheless, the pressing problem of the moment lies not in the question of monotheism *per se*, but in the criterion by which we maintain *trinitarian* monotheism. There is no doubt in Irving's mind that outwith the New Testament, there is no 'knowledge of a trinity of persons in the Divine substance.' There is no question of a *vestigium trinitatis*. We are privy to absolutely no knowledge of a *trinitarian* Deity outwith the divine revelation in Christ. Herein we confront the christocentric nature of Irving's entire thought - knowledge of God's being as Father, Son and Spirit, is derived solely from the history and person of Jesus Christ. Irving's is a supremely christocentric hermeneutic. Who is God in his being-for-himself? He is Father, Son and Spirit. And by what means does he become being-for-others? - solely through his visible and historic being-for-others as Son.

It was not until the Son came into manifestation as a man, until the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, became our Saviour, the long-expected Messiah on earth, the long-looked for Christ and Lord in heaven, for whom all things were created, that the truth of the glorious Trinity became a grand and manifest truth for ever. Because so soon as the Son became manifest He made known the Father, to whom He always inferred back as the eternal Father of the Son, and in Him the great originator of all things, and principal party to the eternal purpose which the Son came forth to reveal. "No one has ever seen God: the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known." By the same act also did the Spirit become manifest; for.. Christ's becoming outward and visible was the act of the Spirit.<sup>99</sup>

However, it is in his searing criticism of his opponents that Irving



reveals the full import he accords the Incarnation in its revelatory nature in making known to us the character of the triune God. It is when he turns upon his Unitarian and Socinian opponents that we are most privy to the magisterial christological position within his entire ontology.

Ye may be able to state out the redemption, without a Trinity of persons in the Godhead: I lay claim to no such ability. Your Trinity is an idle letter in your creed; but it is the soul, the life of mine. Your Christ is a suffering God; I know it well: my Christ is a gracious condescending God, but a suffering man. In your Christ, you see but one person in a body: in my Christ I see the fulness of the Godhead in a body. My Christ is the Trinity manifested: not merely the Trinity told of, but the Trinity manifested. I have the Father manifested in everything which He doth; for He did not His own will, but the will of His Father. I have the Son manifested, in uniting His Divinity to a humanity prepared for Him by the Father; and in making the two most contrary things to meet and kiss each other, in all the actings of his widest, most comprehensive being. I have the Holy Ghost manifested in subduing, restraining, conquering, the evil propensities of the fallen manhood, and making it an apt organ for expressing the will of the Father, a fit and holy substance to enter into personal union with the untempted and untemptable Godhead.<sup>100</sup>

Although this immediately introduces us to Irving's doctrine of Christ, and specifically, those elements in his thought that were to be the object of his excommunication, it is not in our present purpose here to explicate his understanding of the Incarnation. Rather, we turn our attention to the manner by which Irving derives and identifies the divine names of Father and Son from the act of incarnation, and in so doing complete our survey of Irving's *apologia*. Whilst this method may seem to take us away from the role Irving apportions the Spirit in his understanding of Divine being, it is, nevertheless, in harmony with his own theological method, for it is always *from* the Father and Son that Irving derives his understanding of the Spirit. Therefore, it is only through the explicit relation that Irving attributes the Son with the Father, that we gain insight into his doctrine of God as Spirit.

Irving's deductive explication of the Son's divine status, as delineated above, shapes his major polemic against the tide of unitarian thought against which he so resolutely stood. His primary thrust of argument



incorporates the *eternal* status of Sonship vis-à-vis Fatherhood. However, although this identifies the Son with the Word, it has yet to unite the divine with the *human*: the Son with Jesus Christ, and to a lesser degree, the identity of 'God' with Father.

Firstly, then, Irving wishes to identify the Father with the name 'God.' Before the act of incarnation when in his procession from the Father the Son 'took unto Himself flesh of the Virgin Mary'<sup>101</sup> the name 'God' denoted only "the supreme unity and majesty of the Godhead, without any reference simply to the specialities of His revelations."<sup>102</sup> It was only "when the time came to open the mystery of the Trinity" that "this name of God received a special and particular application to the Father."<sup>103</sup> Knowledge of God's being as Father is derived solely from the Incarnation. Any mention of the name 'God' before this event is to be attributed to the 'Godhead in its unity;' it represents the 'substance of the Godhead without any respect to the personalities thereof.'<sup>104</sup> The word "God" belongs to the first person of the Trinity, designating "His essential Godhead and His self-origination, as distinguished from the Son and the Holy Ghost, whose prerogative it is only to be self-existent."<sup>105</sup>

Secondly, the means by which Irving establishes the union between the eternal Son and Jesus Christ is more protracted, and is approached from a dual perspective. The first he deals with at the start of his Trinity sermons. If the Greek form, 'God' is distinct from the Hebrew, 'LORD,' and the identity of the former remains unknown until the event of incarnation, then who is made known to us in the Old Testament? If the Father at all times remains invisible, being known only through the visible manifestation of the Son, then who is the subject of divine revelation in the history of Israel? For Irving, the incarnation is not a totally unique event of *Heilsgeschichte* because he identifies the second person of the Trinity with the Old Testament appellations, 'Lord' and 'Jehovah.' The Old Testament title 'Lord' is identified with that of 'Lord' in the New Testament by means of Acts 2:36, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ," the last two titles being interpreted as 'Jehovah' and the 'Anointed One.' Consequently, "this title of 'The Lord' is...appropriate to



Christ:...it belongs to the second person of the Trinity by special inheritance, and not to the Godhead in its revealed and undivided essence, for which the proper name is God."<sup>106</sup>

Thirdly, having established a union between these names, Irving turns his attention to the specific manner by which Jesus Christ may be identified, within a scriptural hermeneutic, alongside God's being as Son. In order to do so, he sets his mind to explain the name 'Jesus,' which he identifies as *Jehoshua*. 'Jah' signifies a contraction of the divine appellation, 'Jehovah,' found in Psalm 118:4 where in this singular term it denotes the full force of the name. Elsewhere, 'Jah' denotes the eternal signature revealed to Moses in Exodus 3:14 - I AM THAT I AM - teaching us "that self-existent, underived, unchangeable, self-sufficient being is that which is contained under the name Jehovah."<sup>107</sup> Finally, the name, Jehovah, or its compound Jah, has been compounded into Jesus, who, in Revelation 1:8 identifies himself in similar terms: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end...which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."

In addition, Irving extrapolates the significance of 'Hoshea' as signifying 'Saviour' or 'salvation.' 'Hoshea', Saviour, amplifies the identity of the former, Jehovah. Under the old Covenant, Jehovah is known only as Judge: "it is manifest from God's revealing Himself as Jesus, or the Saviour, that the creatures are in a state of condemnation...otherwise what meaning were there in revealing Himself as their Saviour?"<sup>108</sup> Conversely, by means of his appellation, 'Hoshea,' he who formerly is identified as Judge, by becoming the incarnate one and assuming the name Jesus, identifies himself as Saviour.

Inasmuch as God's being is revealed through his personal actions, Irving reaches the point wherein he identifies God's being as Son with the history and person of Jesus.

That word Jah, incorporated with Hoshea in the name of our blessed Lord, is to me a pledge that all things which are written in the law and the prophets the Son of man hath come not to destroy but to fulfil. And accordingly we do find that Jesus hath applied to Him the essential meaning of Jehovah, which is independence on all outward causes, and unalterable by time..Unto this much have we attained, therefore, that all the might and



holiness, all the magnificence of power and splendour of operation, all the faithfulness and immovableness of purpose, together with all words whatsoever written of Jehovah and the old dispensation, are the property of Him who hath revealed Himself under the new as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, the meek, the humble, and the lowly Jesus.<sup>109</sup>

In this manner, Irving identifies the inner trinitarian locus of God's being with the subject of the incarnation. His *apologia*, however, is not entirely complete. Irving has introduced us to the premis that the Divine is revealed in personal event. And there is purpose to such activity: its underlying reason is neither capricious nor indiscriminate. God's being-for-others reveals an essential order of relatedness which not only pervades the entire event of incarnation, but can be traced back to the very ground of being itself: the Trinity of Father, Son and Spirit.

God's being, for Irving, is in his relating. The essential character of God cannot be understood but in an *essentially* trinitarian fashion.<sup>110</sup> We should not underestimate, therefore, the importance Irving accords his doctrine of God in the fight against current unitarian biases. God's being is in his self-relating as Father, Son and Spirit. Therefore, the doctrine of God is at best, a harmonisation of and a balancing between the differing relations and functions of each. In turn, every subsequent doctrine implicitly revolves around a trinal premis Irving brings to every theological discussion. 'Every point of divine truth' is pitted against three criteria: "as it is in the eternal being and purpose of God; as it is manifested to us in the revelation of God;...as it is applied to and appropriated by us for our promotion in the favour of God," namely, in light of the being and existence of Father, Son and Spirit.<sup>111</sup> To focus solely upon the first, he goes on to elucidate, leads only to fatalism and quietism, wherein we either 'are blinded by the darkness of too much light, or lost in the insignificancy of our own being.'<sup>112</sup> Alternatively, to focus simply upon the divine revelation in Christ outwith the purpose it has in the Father's will, can only lead to ignorance about the human will, namely that we "either forget that man hath a will, or believe that the will is determined by the conviction of the mind on the affections of the heart."<sup>113</sup> Lastly, if our attention is given only to the experiential, then

"it very speedily introduceth an ignorant, coarse, and homely way of religion, which never elevates the soul from its natural grovelling."<sup>114</sup> In each, we gain insight to the respective dangers of Calvinism, Arminianism and Evangelicalism and Methodism.

### 5.1 The Means of Grace and Personal Will.

God's being is in his relating: he is personal event; he is being in relating. This is the great mystery revealed in his activity. God in his being-for-others is being in action: "not a thought, nor a word," but being in action.<sup>115</sup>

The nexus of Irving's ontology continues in the consistent manner wherein God's being-for-himself is revealed as his being-for-others: in event, in act, in work. As it is in the Christ-event, so "the Divinity follows out its eternal and necessary law of being in the secret recesses of its own harmonious purpose, with which no creature intermeddleth, and of which no creature is competent to discourse, further than to say, Thus it is, because it is revealed that there is a trinity of persons in the Godhead."<sup>116</sup>

If that which we are privy to in Christ reveals the essential character of the divine being, by what means do we come to understand the Divine? What does the Christ-event reveal about the *mysterium tremendum*? It reveals to us a Father who at all time remains hidden; a Son who chooses to make the Father known; and a Spirit who both unites Father and Son, and brings to fruition the act of the Son's revelation. At this point, we are now able, to explicate the fulcrum by which Irving's ontic analysis of the Incarnation opens up for us, more fully, the character of the trinitarian being.

The *mysterium tremendum* of trinitarian theology, however, presents only one facet of the doctrine of God. With it alone, we drift aimlessly in our theologising. Rather, for Irving, the divine mystery opens up in the event of incarnation. At this point, we are able to understand more fully the



import he accords to Christ as incarnate Word. There is no dislocation between Christ's identity as Word and as Son. As Word, he reveals that which has been spoken 'before the beginning of the world,' and by doing so, proves that 'a revelation by word is older than the fountain head of time, even old as the purpose of the Ancient of days.'<sup>117</sup> It is only because Christ is the Father's Word, that the Son who dwells in the bosom of the Father is able to reveal the Father whom he alone knows. Consequently,

The word is not uttered by the invisible Father, who speaketh nothing but by the Son; nor is it spoken by the Holy Ghost, who speaketh nothing which He hath not heard of the Son; but is spoken by the Son, who speaketh nothing of Himself, but what He heareth from the Father. Neither by the Son is it spoken in His infinite Godhead, but in His predestined creature form.'<sup>118</sup>

It is, however, a focusing upon the ontical with which Irving concerns himself. By what means does the enfleshed Word communicate the purpose of the Father? How is this so? Herein lies the import Irving accords the Spirit: he is *vinculum unitatis*, as we have noted above. But he is also understood in the light of the doctrine of the orthodox fathers as '*vinculum Trinitatis*, the circle of communication between the Father and Son.'<sup>119</sup>

The independence of Irving's thought is highlighted in this most central of ideas. As we have noted, traditionally, the Spirit's specific role within the divine relations has been presented in *agapeic* terms: he is the one by whom the love of the Father for the Son and that of the Son for the Father is fulfilled. Irving's ontology, conversely, prohibits any pneumatic ascription of love. His pneumatology turns on the notion of *ἐνέργεια*: the Spirit includes within himself every possible activity of God. Of course this is not to suggest any divorce between divine *being* and divine *action*. Indeed, to do so would be to annul any meaningful talk of *revelation*. For Irving, there is no *ontological* difference between the divine essence and divine energy, only an epistemological one on the basis of our created finitude.'<sup>120</sup> This concern parallels that of his mentor, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who expresses an equal interest in ontology in his remark that "the question of the nature of the real was not simply a pragmatic one



about its operation: the real had to be seen in its connection to its foundation."<sup>121</sup>

Therefore, when Irving attests that the incarnate Word reveals the Father's purpose, his will, and it is brought to completion by energising event through the Spirit, we are not to interpret this in any other manner than that the divine event of incarnation and redemption is not only consistent with, but reveals to us the very character of divine being.

In this we confront the primary thrust of Irving's thought: the incarnation is God's event. It is not *creating* event. Rather is it *incarnating* event, and as such reveals to us God's-being-in-action, for it involves divine being itself. Herein lies the ontical nature of Irving's inquiry: incarnation is trinitarian event.

Undergirding his entire thought is the absolute primacy he attributes to will. The purpose of the incarnation is, *ipso facto*, to reveal God's will.

It is the great purpose of the Divine will which God was minded from all eternity to make known unto this creatures, for their greater information, delight and blessedness, to make known..to all His intelligent creatures the grace and mercy, the forgiveness and love which he beareth towards those who love the honour of His Son, and believe in the word of His testimony.<sup>122</sup>

This *personal* will is reaffirmed in the act of incarnation, wherein the Father reveals 'that more tender aspect of His being called grace - that part of the Divine substance which could not otherwise have been made known.'<sup>123</sup> But how does Christ reveal to us this grace? He does so by revealing the Father, by 'setting forth every word as proceeding from the Father's will, and every act as the demonstration of His power.' And what is the Father's will? It is both *purpose*, the manifestation of the Son, and *operation*, the work of the Spirit.<sup>124</sup> Herein lies the import Irving accords the Spirit: he is *vinculum unitatis*, as we have noted above, as well as being understood in the light of the doctrine of the orthodox fathers as '*vinculum Trinitatis*, the circle of communication between the Father and Son, through whom the will of the Father expresseth itself to the Son, and the obedience of the Son expresseth itself back again to the



Father.<sup>125</sup> But the pneumatic dimension expresses itself in a thoroughly innovative manner.

Particularly noteworthy here is the intimacy Irving establishes between Father, Son and Spirit. Although the Father is ultimate Will, he chooses to work through his Son, whose role it is 'to word what the Father hath willed.'<sup>126</sup> In turn, both unity and *ἐνέργεια* are established through the Spirit. If the Son performs what the Father wills, if the divine purpose is expressed in filial covenant, it is only the Spirit who brings into existence the fruit of co-operation between Father and Son. Herein lies the consistent import Irving accords the Spirit in any act of the Trinity: he is the one who unites Father and Son. We have, of course, moved in consideration from the divine Being to divine activity. Nevertheless, this is consistent with Irving's method, wherein a distinction is made at all times between the two. The point to be stressed, however, and that omitted by subsequent commentators since Irving's time, is the role he accords the Spirit. If God's-being-for-himself, as Father, Son and Spirit, is understood by means of his *economic activity*, then our supreme insight is derived from the event of incarnation, wherein 'cometh the knowledge of the three subsistencies in the Godhead, and of their common substance, what its purpose is, what its word is, and what its act is,' namely, Father, Son and Spirit.<sup>127</sup> Furthermore, it is from this revelation that we comprehend, in turn, the Godhead in terms of *Personal Will*, residing in the Father, being revealed to us by the Son, but at all times accomplished through the Spirit, who brings the Father's will and the Son's word into existence.<sup>128</sup> This is no addendum, no appendage to a primarily binitarian framework. It is the explication of a thoroughgoing order of relatedness in which the place accorded the Spirit is intrinsic and organic to the divine relations. It is an ontical delineation of the very ground of being, in which only the presence and relatedness of all three divine persons constitutes both the meaningfulness and reality of Father, Son and Spirit.

What does Irving mean, however, when he talks of God's-being-for-himself in terms of *Personal Will*? Is he not the reduction of divine being to such a concept actually *impersonal*? In order to address the priority of will in his thought, it is necessary to consider the manner by which



Samuel Taylor Coleridge's own deduction that the grounds of being is to be understood in terms of Absolute Will, which can be derived from gobbets of thought upon the Trinity are scattered throughout his writings and marginalia, and most clearly in his Academy address '*On the Prometheus of Æschylus*'<sup>129</sup> Whilst the theological methods of Irving and Coleridge differ greatly, we turn to Coleridge in order to establish a possible foundation upon which Irving builds his own understanding of Divine being and consequently human being in light of incarnation.

In his analysis of the Prometheus of Æschylus, Coleridge most formidably presents his case, delineating his understanding of Divine being by means of a basic formula. Both Theist and Pantheist agree that  $W$  (material universe) minus  $G$  (Deity) equals  $O$  (nothing). However, whereas the Pantheist argues that  $G - W = O$ , the Theist substitutes  $G - W = G$ .<sup>130</sup> Coleridge's concern is to delineate the means by which the latter substantiates the real. This he achieves by an analysis of three differing views of reality: the Phœnician, the Semitic and the Greek. Each is subjected to Coleridge's peculiar tetradic formula - Prothesis, Thesis, Antithesis and Synthesis: essential identity, being, act and ability, respectively.

The Phœnician is dismissed on the grounds that it confuses the ground of being by reducing it to two notions: a 'self-organizing chaos' and an 'omniform nature as the result.'<sup>131</sup> Consequently, "with the Phœnician sages the cosmogony is their theogony, and vice-versa."<sup>132</sup> The Greek, secondly, fails for it attributes an impersonal identity to the ground of being. Its cosmogony consists of three elements; 1. the *hyle*, which parallels chaos; 2. τὰ σώματα - the heaven and earth; 3. the Saturnian - οἱ χρόνοι ὑπερχρόνια - the self-polarising power.<sup>133</sup> The impersonal nature of being for them resides in the plurality of law and being, rather than personal unity, because the divine is not the cause of reality, but its substance.<sup>134</sup> It is only in the tetradic Semitic formula that Coleridge identifies an ultimately personal ground of being: 1. Unbeginning creator; 2. Antecedent night or chaos (gravity); 3. the chaos; 4. the created material world.<sup>135</sup> Herein lies a cosmogony which remains distinct from



the theogony, and vice-versa. It is, however, a theogony which comes to fullest expression in the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.

In order to understand how Coleridge reaches this conclusion, we must turn to his other formularistic notions whereby he identifies the Trinity in terms of the *tetractys*: Identity (that which is essentially causative of all possible true being, the absolute subjectivity, the Good.), Ipseity (I Am in that I Am, Father), Alterity (supreme being, ὁ ὄντως ὢν, Jehovah, Son, Word) Community (Spirit - of Holiness, to the Father, - of Truth, to the Son).<sup>136</sup>

The immediate question raised, however, in such an assertion, involves the means by which Coleridge identifies a *tetractys* with the notion of threefoldness. As Hardy points out, each of the four elements of the *tetractys* is not intended to represent a person.<sup>137</sup> Coleridge simplifies this in a manner which parallels the orthodox distinction between *ousia* and *hypostasis*,

In the Trinity there is, 1. Ipseity. 2. Alterity. 3. Community.  
You may express the formula thus:  
God, the Absolute Will or Identity =  
    Prothesis.  
The Father = Thesis. The Son = Antithesis. The Spirit =  
    Synthesis.<sup>138</sup>

Thus, "The Trinity is, 1. The Will; 2. The Reason or Word; 3. The Love, or Life. As we distinguish these 3, so we must unite them in 1 God. The union must be as transcendent as the distinction."<sup>139</sup> Hardy points out that with the early Coleridge, there remained the "tendency to spatialize considerations of being."<sup>140</sup> God's being, however, transcends the notion of space and time, and for this reason, Hardy argues that Coleridge sought to conceptualise God's being in non-spatial terms, by attributing the priority of Will to God. It is "an absolute Will, which...is essentially causative of reality and therefore *in origine* causative of it own reality, the essential causativeness, however, abiding undiminished and undiminishable."<sup>141</sup> This notion of Will is advanced most fully in his *Opus Maximum*, where Coleridge seeks to 'build upon the idea of personality in

the Absolute Will,"<sup>142</sup> upon a thoroughgoing ontology of Will, where 'the Triune God is, above all, Absolute Will.'<sup>143</sup>

The priority given by Coleridge, then, in identifying God as Absolute and Personal Will both parallels and differs from that which we have delineated in Irving. Whilst Coleridge focuses upon the philosophic-substantial character of Absolute will, the more overtly personal-individual is highlighted by Irving. It is, however, of interest to outline the significant parallels and dissimilarities each has with the other.

Firstly, we can trace Irving's specific identity of paternal 'Self-origination' back to Coleridge. If, as has been mentioned already, *Will* is understood as the cause of God's own, and subsequently all other reality, then *personality* establishes the 'other-directedness' of God's essential being; necessitating an 'Other Self' who differs from the 'Primary Self.' However, the Self "in both is self-subsistent, but which yet is not the same because the one only is self-originated."<sup>144</sup> It is because the 'absolute mind' is 'from all eternity personal' that 'from all eternity' it is 'Father Almighty.' The thought or expression, the Word, of this mind is the personal, only begotten Son of God.<sup>145</sup>

A supreme, self-originated being hath communicated himself without withholding, and for this act, no recipient being conceived previously thereto, the nearest analogy, and at all events the least inappropriate term and conception that human knowledge and human language contain, is that of *begetting*, and the most expressive relation that of *Father* and *Son*.<sup>146</sup>

Secondly, and of significance, is the subsequent identity Coleridge apportions the Spirit. Firstly, he identifies the Spirit as "the act, in which the Father and the Son are One."<sup>147</sup> In a manner which Irving later re-echoes in his idea of the *vinculum Trinitatis*, Coleridge delineates the "perfect Idea", the Spirit, as

that which proceedeth from the Father to the Son, and that which is returned from the Son to the Father, and which in this circulation constitutes the eternal unity in the eternal altrity and distinction, the life of Deity in actu purissimu. This is truly the Breath of life indeed, the perpetual action of the act, the perfect intellection alike of the Intellectus and of



the Intelligible and the perpetual being and existing of that which saith "I Am".<sup>148</sup>

However, Coleridge perceives the Spirit as Act, as event, in purely agapeic terms. This union is a union of Love: Love is the Spirit of God. Herein is to be found the Achilles' heel: whereas Coleridge identifies the Spirit as love, and in so doing, perpetuates his tradition, Irving radicalises the notions received from Coleridge. That Irving applies himself more fully to the scriptural than the philosophic (and in Coleridge's case, specifically Kantian philosophy), may explain this pneumatic difference. However, it is also fair to suggest that Irving's soteriological goal dictated his pneumatology.

What is of considerable note here, however, is the fact that Irving expands the early Coleridge, who presents the fourth element of this tetractys as ACT. Furthermore, Irving may be understood as developing that which he receives from Coleridge by purifying and systematising it. The notion of Absolute Will demands the complementary idea of ἐνέργεια in order to bring about its purpose. That purpose, Irving identifies as Love and Grace. But it is a purpose that is impotent without the *power* to accomplish that which it wills. Furthermore, in light of the Divine as made known to us in incarnation, we see that the Father's enfleshed Word, his filial expression, comes to purpose *through* the Spirit. Thus although from Coleridge Irving may have received the ideas which facilitated an explication of incarnation in terms of Personal and Absolute Will, he has moulded these ideas to incorporate the Spirit not in any addended or synthetic addition, but in a manner wherein God's-being-as-Spirit is fundamental to any conceptualisation of him in terms of his-being-as-Father or Son. In turn, by incorporating the idea of Will into his very ontology, Irving establishes the means by which he may unite the event of incarnation, wherein touch the divine and human, the infinite and finite, the transcendent and the immanent with God's creatureliness.

On the basis of this ontology of *Personal Will* Irving is able to establish a christology which facilitates a central place to the work and being of God the Spirit. In that the Father's will is communicated to the Son, and

the Son's obedience to the Father by means of the Spirit, we shall therefore expect to find in Irving's christology this notion of the *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa* whereby an essential place given over to the Spirit. However, before we are able to do so, we must first turn our attention to another relatively unexplored dimension of Irving's christology, which, like his doctrine of God as Trinity, is foundational to any adequate perception of his christology, namely, his doctrine of human being. Whilst our attention in Part I has been to present Irving's understanding of the trinitarian character of God, and in particular the relation of God's-being-as-Spirit with that of the Father and Son, our attention in Part II will focus not only on Irving's understanding of human being, but also the manner by which he is able to talk meaningfully not only of incarnation, but of the Spirit's place in incarnation.



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- CHF      Christ's Holiness in Flesh, the Form, Fountain Head, and Assurance to Us of Holiness in Flesh.    Edinburgh: John Lindsay & Co., 1831.
- CS      The Doctrine Held by the Church of Scotland Concerning the Human Nature of Our Lord, As Stated in Her Standards.    Edinburgh: John Lindsay & Co, 1830.
- CW      The Collected Writings of Edward Irving in Five Volumes.    Ed. Rev. G. Carlyle, London: Alexander Strahan & Co., 1864.
- LD      The Last Days: A Discourse on the Evil Character of These our Times: Proving them to be the "Perilous Times" of the "Last Days."    London: R.B. Sulley & W. Burnside, 1828.
- MW      The Morning Watch.    Vols. V, VII, London: James Fraser, 1833.
- OCD      The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of our Lord's Human Nature. Set forth in four parts.    London: Baldwin and Craddock, 1830.
- OCLHN    The Opinions Circulating Concerning our Lord's Human Nature, Tried By The Westminster Confession of Faith.    Edinburgh: John Lindsay & Co., 1830.
- OG      For the Oracles Of God, Four Orations. For Judgement to Come, An Argument, in 9 Parts.    London: T. Hamilton, 1823.
- PW      The Prophetical Works of Edward Irving In Two Volumes.    London: Alexander Strahan, 1867.

## FOOTNOTES

1. T. Wolfe: Of Time and the River. A Legend of Man's Hunger in His Youth. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952, p34.
2. H.-G. Gadamer: Truth and Method, London: Sheed & Ward. 1975, p381.
3. Comment in J. O'Donnell: "The Trinity as Divine Community", Gregorianum 69.1, 1988, pp5-34, pp11-13.
4. John 1:1, 14.
5. E. A. Johnson: "Christology's Impact on the Doctrine of God." Heythrop Journal XXVI (1985), pp143-163, p145.
6. Basil of Caesarea, Letters; Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, (henceforth NPNF<sup>2</sup>), Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, vol VIII, 1975, CLXXXIX.6, p231.
7. B. B. Warfield: Calvin and Calvinism, New York: Oxford University Press, 1931, 195.
8. F.D. Schleiermacher: The Christian Faith, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986, p16, 18. Our interest in Schleiermacher will be expanded in detail in Part III. S.T. Coleridge: Aids To Reflection, Edinburgh: John Grant, MCMV, esp. p.114: "Aphorisms on that which is indeed spiritual religion". Although Coleridge moves towards a trinitarian understanding of divine being, it is not as fully developed and therefore as integral to his theology as it is in Irving's.  
  
It is of interest to note Irving's contemporaneity with both scholars. Irving died in 1834, the same year as Coleridge and Schleiermacher, three years after Hegel, and two after Goethe.
9. E. Irving, CW 5:350-351.
10. T. R. Martland: "A Study of Cappadocian and Augustinian Trinitarian Methodology," Anglican Theological Review, vol.47, 1965, pp252-263, pp252-253.
11. See K. Barth: Church Dogmatics, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1980, 1. 1. 300.
12. M.O.W. Oliphant: Edward Irving, London: Hurst and Blackett, 5th edition, no date, 220.
13. Irving was excommunicated from the Church of Scotland on 13th March, 1833, at Annan, Scotland.
14. M. Heidegger: Being and Time, London: SCM Press Ltd, 1962, p91.
15. Throughout his writings, Irving wages opposition against all three historic misrepresentations of Christ's relation to the Divine.



16. CW 4:223.
17. CW 4:224-225.
18. J. Pelikan: The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600), Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 172.
19. CW 4:228.
20. CW 4:252.
21. See Athanasius: The Incarnation of the Word of God. London: Geoffrey Bles, The Centenary Press, 1944.19.
22. L. Carroll: Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, and Through the Looking Glass, London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1981, pp185-186.

'When I use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said in a rather scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean - neither more nor less.'

The question is,' said Alice, 'whether you *can* make words means different things.'

'The question is,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'which is to be master - that's all...'

'That's a great deal to make one word mean,' Alice said in a thoughtful tone.

'When I make a word do a lot of work like that,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'I always pay it extra.'

'Oh!' said Alice. She was too much puzzled to make any other remark.

'Ah, you should see 'em come round me of a Saturday night,' Humpty Dumpty went on, wagging his head gravely from side to side, 'for to get their wages, you know.'

23. CW 4:245.
24. CW 4:241-242.
25. There is a similarity in thought here between Irving and his friend, John McLeod Campbell. Like Irving, he was excommunicated from the Church of Scotland for teaching thought to be contrary to that of Scripture and the Reformers. In McLeod Campbell's case, it was over the universal nature of God's love, rather than a particular love for the elect alone. He argues against any legal notion of atonement which satisfies the heart of the Father but leaves the believer uncertain as to whether he is still exposed to God's wrath. Both he and Irving are adamant in their proclamation that in the work and person of Jesus Christ, there is the full manifestation of the loving character of God. "In the life of Christ, as the revelation of the Father by the Son, we see the love of God to man - the will of God

for man - the eternal life which the Father has given to us in the Son." The Nature of the Atonement, London: James Clark and Co. Ltd., 1949, p176. It would be fair to say that there took place a considerable cross-pollinisation of thought between the two friends who, in turn, drew more consistently from their Calvinistic and Scriptural background than the Church which deposed them.

26. CW 4:246.

27. CW 4: 258.

28. CW 4:258-259.

29. The most magisterial of which is to be found in K. Barth's Church Dogmatics, *op cit*.

30. CW 4:259.

31. *ibid*.

32. CW 4:260.

33. CW 4:261.

34. CW 4:262.

35. CW 4:261-261.

36. See C. Keisling: "On Relating to the Persons of the Trinity," Theological Studies 47, 1986, pp599-616. The use of 'person' must carry some definite reality which embraces both its meaning for human beings and God. Despite the problems in using the word 'person' today vis-à-vis God, the word carries within its meaning not only its contemporary meaning, but also the weight of over 1500 years of Church tradition. (See K. Rahner: The Trinity, New York: Herder and Herder, 1970, p40). Although "language about the three persons of the Trinity is ultimately silence before mystery" this "does not mean nothing is to be said before we reach the doors of the sanctuary behind which silence prevails." pp600-601.

37. H.A. Wolfson: The Philosophy of the Church Fathers. Faith, Trinity, Incarnation. 3rd ed. Rev., Mass: Harvard University Press, 1976. The Apologists, as philosophers, faced a two-fold problem: firstly, how can immaterial beings be counted a three, if, according to Aristotle, anything which is numerical must be material? Secondly, how can the three be one? Their solution, Wolfson states, was to argue contrary to Philo and argue not for an absolute unity, but a relative unity:- "a unity which would allow within it a combination of three distinct elements." pp307-317.

38. K Surin: The Turnings of Darkness and Light. Essays in Philosophical and Systematic Theology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989. pp30-31.



39. Martland, *op cit.* pp252-253,
40. Wolfson, *op cit.*, 363.
41. G.L. Prestige: God in Patristic Thought, London:SPCK, 1985<sup>s</sup> p225.
42. B. Otis: "Cappadocian Thought as a Coherent System," Dumbarton Oaks Papers, No. 12, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1958, pp95-124, p107.
43. See Hardy E.R. Christology of the Later Fathers, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1954, pp241-244.
44. Basil of Caesarea: Letters, NPNF<sup>2</sup>, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978, Vol. VIII, XXXVIII.8, p141.  
  
M.V. Anastos: "Basil's  $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha$  'Εὐνομίου, A Critical Analysis," in, Basil of Caesarea: Christian, Humanist, Ascetic. Part One, ed. P. J. Fedwick, Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1981, pp67-136, p 107, fn.135. Anastos argues for Gregory of Nyssa as author of the 38th letter. See also J.N.D Kelly: Early Christian Doctrines, London: Adam & Charles Black, 1977<sup>s</sup> p264.
45. *op cit.*, CCXIV.4, p254.
46. Kelly, *op cit.*, 226.
47. Gregory of Nazianzus: The Theological Orations, NPNF<sup>2</sup> vol.VII, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978, 3. XVI, p306.
48. *ibid.*, 3.II  
Basil underlines this in his use of two different movements: knowledge of God is from the Spirit, through the Son to the Father. Goodness and holiness extend from the Father, through the Son to the Spirit, De Spiritu Sanctu, XVIII.47, NPNF<sup>2</sup> vol. VIII p29. See B. Bobrinskoy, "The Indwelling of the Spirit in Christ. 'Pneumatic Christology' in the Cappadocian Fathers." St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly, vol 28, no 1, 1984, pp49-65, esp pp 55-58.
49. Kelly, *op cit.*, 262.
50. Gregory of Nyssa: On Not Three Gods, (Christology of the Later Fathers, vol. III, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, MCMLIV), p261.
51. H.B. Swete: The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church, MacMillan and Co. Ltd.
52. Letters, *op cit.*, CLXXXIX.7-8, (p231).
53. See footnote 44 for details.
54. Contra Macedonians, 2:10:12:24.
55. Theological Orations. 5.X.

56. *ibid.*, 5.XXVI.
57. In the Third Constantinople Lecture, R.P.C. Hanson states, "We may ..accept the Nicene Creed as the end of the process of the formation of the church's doctrine of the Trinity." The Making of the Doctrine of the Trinity, Anglican and Eastern Churches Association, 1984, p1. E.L. Mascall, however, states the situation more clearly, whilst commenting on 2. Cor. 13:14, "I would hold that there is a line of homogeneous development from the implicit but definite trinitarianism of the text of St. Paul to the explicit and systematic teaching of documents such as the so-called Athanasian Creed..What I want to stress is that the discussion is still a living one." The Triune God. An Ecumenical Study, Worthing: Churchman Publishing Ltd., 1986, p7. Although Hanson may be correct in suggesting that trinitarian formulations undoubtedly have been moulded by Nicea, Mascall is nearer the truth in stating that the debate continues today.
58. CW 4:235.
59. CW 4:236.
60. CW 4:509.
61. CW 4:246.
62. K. Barth: The Knowledge of God and the service of God according to the teaching of the Reformation, London: Hodder and Stoughton Publishers, 1949, p25.
63. CW 4:264.
64. G.D. Kaufman: An Essay on Theological Method, Missoula: Scholars Press, 1979, pp37-39.
65. J.P. Mackey: The Christian Experience of God as Trinity, London: SCM Press Ltd., 1983, 173.
66. See B. Bobrinskoy, *op cit.* for more recent development of Cappadocian pneumatology.
67. E. Jüngel, The Doctrine of the Trinity, Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1976.
68. CW 4:232.
69. Augustine: The Trinity, Trans. S McKenna, Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1981<sup>3</sup>, 15.17.29.
70. Richard of St. Victor: Book 3 of the Trinity, London: SPCK, 1979, trans., G.A. Zinn. Benjamin Minor, West Germany: Wiedfeld & Mehl, 1960, trans., S.V. Yanowski.
71. CW 4:263.



72. *ibid.*
73. CW 4:265.
74. PW 1: 335.
75. CW 1:263-264. Italics mine.
76. Barth, 1.1.479.
77. CW 1:263-264.
78. Barth, 1.1.480.
79. M. Maus: "A Category of the Human Mind", in Category of the Person. Eds. M. Carrithers, S. Collins, S. Lukes, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, pp18ff.
80. Anastos, *op cit.* 129.
81. Basil's Letters, *op cit*, CXXV.375.
82. *ibid*, CCIII, CXIV.
83. Orations *op cit.*, 43. (68-69).
84. A. Meredith, "The Pneumatology of the Cappadocian Fathers and the Creed of Constantinople," Irish Theological Quarterly, vol. 48, 1981, pp196-211, p4.
85. Fr. B. Pruch: Basile de Césarée sur le Saint-Esprit, Sources Chrétiennes, 17bis.
86. J.D. Zizioulas: Credo in Spiritum Sanctum (Atti del congresso teologico internazionale di Pneumatologia), Rome: Vaticana Libreria Editrice, p32.
87. J.D. Zizioulas: Being as Communion, London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 1985, p42.
88. *ibid*, 44. Schleiermacher makes a very perceptive and critical comment regarding such an interpretation which directly addresses the theological method assumed by Zizioulas, but one of which Irving is not guilty.
- 'They identify the Father with the unity of the Divine Essence, but not the Son or the Spirit. This can be traced right back to the idea of Origen, that the Father is God absolutely, while Son and Spirit are God only by participation in the Divine Essence - an idea which is positively rejected by orthodox Church teachers, but secretly underlies their whole procedure.'
89. At last, Christian orthodoxy was equipped with a linguistic framework which furnished it with an ontology embracing the "one" and the

"many." Sabellianism had found its defeat in this process of re-definition. Subsequently, that which united the Godhead was the common *ousia*; that which distinguished the three persons was the individual *hypostases*. As Basil states in Letter XXXVIII:

'That of the proper nature no difference can be conceived as existing between one and the other, the peculiar characteristics shining, in community of essence, upon each.'

90. Gregory of Nyssa: On Not Three Gods, *op cit.* 266.

91. Jüngel, *op cit.* 30.

92. M. Polanyi: Personal Knowledge. Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987, ch.5, pp69-131.

93. Schønberg, Moses und Aron, Uxbridge: The Hillingdon Press, 1974, Act 1, Scenes 1, 2, 4.

Moses:       Only one, Eternal,  
                  all pervading one,  
                  invisible,  
                  and indefinable God!

Other gods are but inventions,  
                  within the minds of men.  
In whom the Almighty one cannot be  
                  contained.

Chorus:       Can he never be seen?  
                  Is he never visible?  
                  Why? can your almighty God  
                  not reveal himself before us?

94. *ibid.* Act 1 Scene 2.

95. *ibid.* Act 2 Scene 4.

Moses:       And all was but madness  
                  that I believed before,  
                  which can and must not be spoken of!  
                  O  
                  O word, which I am denied.

96. John 1:8.

97. CW 5:408-409.

98. CW 5:87.

99. CW 5:87-88.

100. CW 5:170.



101. CW 4:231.
102. CW 4:229.
103. CW 4:231.
104. *ibid.*
105. CW 4:240.
106. CW 4:231. Although Irving draws from both his Augustinian and the more contemporary influence of Hooker, he deviates from both in this understanding of theophany. Both the former argue that the *entire* Godhead appeared to the Fathers, and that the entire Divine Nature became incarnate in Christ. See Augustine: De Trinitate 2; 8, 9, 12. R. Hooker: The Works of Mr. Richard Hooker, In Eight Books of the Laws of Ecclestial Polity, London: William Baynes & Son, 1822, V. 51:2.
107. CW 4:337.
108. CW 4:343.
109. CW 4:338.
110. F.D. Schleiermacher, "On the Discrepancy between the Sabellian and Athanasian Method of Representing the Doctrine of the Trinity," The Biblical Repository and Quarterly Observer, XVII, April 1835, pp265-353, (pp265-339, Translator's comments).
111. CW 4:270. (See *ibid* 270-271 where Irving expounds his trinal method in detail. See also CW 5:414).
112. *ibid.*
113. CW 4:271.
114. *ibid.* This entire argument is expounded in detail in CW 5:350-361.
115. CW 5:408.
116. CW 5:406.
117. CW 4:404.
118. CW 5:405.
119. CW 5:406.
120. D. Wendebourg: "From the Cappadocian Fathers to Gregory Palamas. The Defeat of Trinitarian Theology," in Studia Patristica Vol.XVII: Part 1, pp194-198, Ed. E.A. Livingstone, Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1982.
121. D.W. Hardy, "Coleridge On The Trinity", The Anglican Theological Review LXIX:2, pp145-155, 1988.

122. CW 5:12.
123. CW 5:13.
124. CW 5:347.
125. CW 5:406.
126. CW 5:408.
127. CW 5:409.
128. The manner in which Irving identifies divine activity has similarities with that favoured by the dynamic reciprocal penetration implicit in the Greek notion of *Περιχώρησις*. It is of interest to note that his method does not favour the more traditional western approach of *circuminessio* which implies the idea of a more static coinherence in repose. In this, Irving stands much more closely to the Cappadocian stress on the diversity of persons, rather than the western notion of unity. (See W. Kasper: The God of Jesus Christ, London: SCM Press Ltd., 1984, p284).
129. S.T. Coleridge: On the Prometheus of Æschylus; an Essay, preparatory to a series of Disquisitions respecting the Egyptian connection with the Sacerdotal Theology, and in contrast with the Mysteries of ancient Greece. London: J. Moyes, 1825.
130. *ibid.* 4.
131. *ibid.* 11.
132. *ibid.*
133. *ibid.*
134. *ibid.* 12.
135. *ibid.* 10.
136. 'Opus Maximum,' Victoria College MSB. Cited in J.R. Barth, Coleridge and Christian Tradition, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969, pp93-94.
137. D. Hardy, *op cit.* 9.
138. Table Talk, *op cit* July 8 1827.
139. *ibid.* May 15 1830.
140. D. Hardy, *op cit.* 6.
141. MSB. f.251. Cited in J. R. Barth, *op cit.* 89.



142. MSB<sub>3</sub> f.243. Cited in J.M. Boulger: Coleridge as Religious Thinker. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961, p131.
143. J.R. Barth, *op cit.* 104. This will be expanded in more detail in Part III.
144. MSB<sub>3</sub> f.251. Cited in J. R. Barth, *op cit.* 89.
145. MSB<sub>3</sub> f.253-254. Cited in J. R. Barth, *op cit.* 90.
146. MSB<sub>3</sub> f.259. Cited in J. R. Barth, *op cit.* 90.
147. MSB<sub>3</sub> f.277. Cited in J. R. Barth, *op cit.* 91.
148. Notebook 36, f.51. Cited in Boulger, *op cit.* 141.

PART II: IRVING'S DOCTRINE OF HUMAN BEING.



### 1. Introduction.

Why talk of a heavenly flesh, when you have no grounds to offer us for your celestial theory? Why deny it to be earthy, when you have the best reasons for knowing it to be earthy? He hungered under the devil's *temptation*; He thirsted with the woman of Samaria; He wept over Lazarus; He trembles at death (for "the flesh," as He says, "is weak"); At last He pours out blood. These, I suppose, are celestial marks?"

Inherent to the Judeo-Christian belief of an incarnated God is the legacy of docetism by virtue of the Graeco-Roman context within which Christianity grew. Matter and spirit are perceived to be logical opposites. How then can that which is pure Spirit both assume a human form, *and* be seen to suffer? Herein are raised fundamental questions concerning the *kind* of humanity assumed in incarnation. What is the nature of humanity assumed by the Son within a spirit - matter dualism? And what are the criteria for such an understanding? This legacy of various docetic biases provides a constant and creative tension in which incarnational theology has sought to express itself. The notion of two distinct worlds, the noumenal or spiritual, and the material, permeating thought from Parmeneides through Plato to Kant into present materialist ideologies, has influenced the conceptuality of subsequent incarnational christologies. It expresses itself in the ancient flight from the material through to its modern reverse, a flight from the spiritual. In dialogue with, as well as in bondage to, both forms of thought, the Christian faith has sought to assert in meaningful form the belief that both 'worlds' have met in the person and history of Jesus Christ. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands...we proclaim to you."<sup>2</sup> In effect, 'very' God becomes 'very' man.

However, the expression this endeavour assumes has been multiform, in which, for the most part, Tertullian's argument above fits unsquarely. Indeed, he is seen to represent that which establishes the very boundaries of christological anthropology: the building bricks for future theological development. Yet Tertullian's assertion became lost in the more relevant and pressing issues of debate. The confession that the worlds of the



Divine and the purely created have come together in the event of incarnation; that the Creator has assumed the created, the Infinite the finite, the Transcendent expressed in a materialised immanent form, strangely mutated into its very anti-thesis: the Kantian separation of the noumenal from the material, with its ultimate expression in pure materialism. The noumenal becomes that which is beyond reason, completely 'other,' to the exclusion of any point of contact with the mundane. Thus we break from the initial patristic roots of an incarnated God, and face the apparently insurmountable modern problem of addressing Jesus Christ as a revelation of the Divine.<sup>3</sup> It is the historical conclusion to a problem of 'opposites' which lacks an adequate conceptual framework within which a solution may be found. So, christology is vacated of any transcendent dimension and becomes reductionist in its thinking, with theological assertions being reduced to merely anthropological statements.

This 'Copernican' shift highlights the debate to which Irving addresses himself. The reaction of modern thinking to a highly other-worldly interpretation of the Christian gospel, in which the humanity and materiality of human existence and that of Jesus Christ is undermined, lends itself to this increasingly reductionist interpretation of the Christ-event. This is the age of humanity. The divine is too wholly other: an unknown and unverifiable commodity. Human being has come of age. No longer is it necessary to present one's cosmology through the rigid and other worldly framework of Christian tradition. The anthropocentric rapidly replaces the theocentric.

To this extent, Irving can be interpreted as perceiving this development as a healthy reaction against too transcendent an interpretation of the Christ-event. Its solution, however, he understands as less healthy, for it entails a flight from the divine, rather than an adequate reappraisal of the relationship between the divine and the human as presented in the incarnation. I suggested in the previous chapter that had Irving's opponents more fully understood his doctrine of God, they would have gained a more adequate insight into his reasoning with regard to the dynamics of the incarnation. Yet, his doctrine of God is so precocious that had they done so, there would have been added only more fuel to the



fire. Similarly, had they understood his doctrine of human being, they would have comprehended the reasoning behind his stress on the type of human nature assumed in Christ and seen it as an attempt to address the soteriological implications he intuited in the present *Zeitgeist*. However, in so doing, they would have been confronted by a theological anthropology as distinct as his doctrine of God.

For Irving the reappraisal of and solution to the modern problem entails, to some extent, a pneumatological perceptual shift: an addressing of the Spirit's role in the incarnation and inner-trinitarian life of the Godhead. This Irving outlines within a trinitarian principle of revelation as discussed in the previous chapter: the incarnate Son reveals to us the nature and character of the Godhead. In and through Christ there is revealed the Triune God; Father, Son and Spirit. But at the same time, the Christ who reveals to us the being of God, reveals also what it means to be human. Thus, the "other-worldly" dimension of Irving's hermeneutic is rooted in this present dimension of created time, in the very 'stuff' of human being. Nevertheless, although somewhat unconventional, Irving's is far from an unorthodox anthropology. He stands firmly in line with Reformed thinking, echoing the opening comments of Calvin's *Institutes*: "Without knowledge of self there is no knowledge of God. Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves."<sup>4</sup>

However, whereas Calvin suggests a lack of clarity regarding the relationship between the human and divine, Irving extends Calvin's maxim by making more explicit the role of Christ. It is of significance to note here how Irving's revelational hermeneutic, wherein Christ reveals both the divine and the human, also takes precedence over Barth's comment on Calvin's opening statement in the *Institutes*: that "we cannot accept the theses of Calvin unless we transplant them from the empty and rather speculative sphere in which they stand in his thinking, and root them once more in the firm ground of the knowledge of Jesus Christ in which they really grew even in Calvin."<sup>5</sup>



For Calvin, Irving and Barth, the incarnation prohibits an explication of the relationship between God and his world in terms of logical complements. The revelation by Jesus Christ of both the divine and the human must be understood to be different from this. However, any revelational theology, either in terms of *analogia fides* or *analogia entis*, demands an inquiry into the relationship between the divine and the human. Otherwise, the modern reaction, against which any such revelational theology is itself reacting, remains unaddressed.

Thus, in what way is it possible for us to talk rationally about the meeting of these two apparently logical opposites: the spiritual and the material, the human and the divine? Irving's response to this problem involves an explication of his doctrine of human being in light of the revelation of God in and by Jesus Christ. At the heart of the matter is the problem of being and how it is perceived. If God and humanity are comprehended as logical opposites, the problem remains insurmountable: the modern reaction to traditional Christian theology is justifiable both in form and content. Any presentation of divine and human being as logical opposites results in a faulty perception of being per se, which directly impinges upon the soteriological significance of the Christ-event.

In what way, therefore, does Irving perceive his inherited metaphysic to be inadequate? I have hinted, in Part I, that Irving understood this to be a pneumatological inadequacy. But it would be an inadequate representation of his thought to arrest the debate at this point: at the heart of the matter Irving understood the problem to involve an inadequate perception of the grounds of being itself. The inadequate perception of the Spirit's being and role within the divine relations and economy has led to an erosion of the true humanity of Christ, and subsequently of the Christian doctrine of human being. He addresses this problem in his doctrine of God which facilitates a more consistently trinitarian ontology: God's being is in his relating as Father, Son and Spirit. In turn, Irving applies this derivation from revelation to the source of revelation itself, the person and humanity of Christ. Thus he completes his hermeneutical circle. However, to return to the initial problem, the relation between the human and the divine has not been addressed. The purpose of Part II is to



delineate the manner by which Irving establishes a way of relating the human with the divine in incarnation, and one which makes sense of the presence of the person and work of God the Spirit in incarnation.

In order to do so, we must turn to Irving's doctrine of human being, the most neglected area of his entire theology. To this date, there has been no direct examination of Irving's, supposedly unorthodox,<sup>6</sup> christology in light of his anthropology, let alone any explication of Irving's anthropology, either in the literature of his opponents or in recent Irving research. That this is so is a somewhat ironic statement upon theological critical procedure. It was on the very basis of his anthropological concepts that Irving faced the full vehemence of his mother church. By means of them, he sought to present a christology which both addressed and grappled with traditional hamartiological and soteriological questions. We can summarize these in Kelsey's words:

1. What is it about human beings that makes it possible for them in their finitude to know the infinite God?
2. What is it about human beings that makes fallenness possible in such a radical way as to require the kind of redemption to which Christianity witnesses?<sup>7</sup>

It is to this neglected element of Irving's thought and his answer to these questions that attention is turned, not as a point of mere interest, but as the hermeneutical key that unlocks his entire thought. An understanding of his doctrine of human being is, therefore, of fundamental importance to his christology, and one which has to be analysed in detail before the purpose of his soteriological emphasis may be more fully understood.

### 1.2 . Strange News from Another Star.<sup>8</sup>

The rabbinic tradition of Israel recounts a tale about the creation of the world. Having completed creating everything in five days, the Creator asked one the attending angels whether anything were still missing. The angel answered that everything was, of course, perfect, as one might expect of God's own handiwork. "Yet perhaps," the angel ventured, "perhaps one thing could make this already perfect work more perfect: speech, to



praise its perfection." God thereupon approved the angel's words and created the human creature.<sup>9</sup>

It is through this speaking creature that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. The speaking God, *Deus loquens*, creates through his own Word, the speaking creature. In history, the speaking creature is assumed by the Word: the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. In this very act of incarnation the speaking God takes on human language in the speaking creature. The speaking creature, in turn, takes on the divine language of the Word. In this way, knowledge of human being can be understood to facilitate true knowledge of the Divine.

Epistemologically, this suggests that the anthropological dimension to any given christology is of major importance. And so it is. What is more problematic, however, is the relationship between the human and divine in the context of *Heilsgeschichte*. From what direction do we approach our doctrine of human being? Christian cosmogonies and cosmologies (theories about the origin of the universe, and treatises on the structure of creation), by and large, have explicated knowledge of the human in terms of the conflict between either an archaeological or a teleological interpretation of creation. On the whole, the dominant interpretation has been the former. The fall from an originally perfect state necessitates a return to the primordial state of perfection in which the first human beings were created. *Heilsgeschichte* is then interpreted in light of a return to this primordial state of perfection. Human being is interpreted in terms of its ἀρχή, its beginning: its τέλος is determined, consequently, by its ἀρχή. Unfortunately, this facilitates a static and Aristotelian interpretation of human being: a qualitative commodity that, having lost its original identity, necessitates a restoration to the initial proto-type. But in light of our increasing knowledge of the human condition, such a 'proto-type' and any subsequent return to paradise lost comes, indeed, as 'strange news from another star.'

The teleological, on the other hand, may be understood as representing a more developmental and progressive interpretation of human history. Human being is interpreted in terms of its τέλος, its end: the ἀρχή in light of



the subsequent τέλος. Consequently, human being is liberated from the determinism of its past, of its ἀρχή, to be conceived in dynamic and relational terms. It is from this direction Irving perceives the human story: the ἀρχή by the τέλος.

I believe God hath ordained nature in its present form, and established it according to its present laws, for the single and express purpose of shadowing forth that future perfect condition into which it is to be brought: so that from man down to the lowest creation...everything containeth the presentiment of its own future perfection.<sup>10</sup>

This alone, however, is insufficient for Irving. In turn, he subordinates this teleological interpretation of the human story to a more primary interpretative principle that prevents any diminuation of the human predicament. His cosmogony is determined by revelation. So he writes:

We must receive our first principles of cosmogony from revelation, and adopt them as the card by which we steer our course of action, before ever our intercourse with the visible world, or human life, will leave behind it any soil upon which the seed of the word will take root and flourish.<sup>11</sup>

Irving's cosmogony is derived, subsequently, from a prior act of the Godhead: *all* things are created in and through Christ, and, as we shall see in Part III, this he interprets as a creation in and through the preincarnate form assumed by the Son. In the very act of creating, the Son chooses to do so not in the blazing glory of infinite Godhead, but, as it were, through the reduced and fracted beam of created being, his future assumed form of being. Consequently, his cosmogony and cosmology are safeguarded from the threat of anthropocentrism for creation has its being and meaning in and through the Son. Consequently, history has *personal* meaning: it takes its direction in and through, because and from, the history of God in Christ. And this is not merely by virtue of the *saving* work of Christ, but more significantly, from the *creating* work of the Son. To this extent, Irving presents us with a theology in which the Creator and the Saviour are inextricably united in the act of *creation*, not merely *salvation*. Creation has an appointed end by virtue of the humanity of the incarnated Son. We confront not only a western doctrine of man which relocates the direction of human being in terms of its τέλος, but one



which also finds its form and meaning in and through the human history of the incarnated Son. For this reason, the τέλος of the history of human being is inextricably linked to the humanity of Jesus Christ. Consequently, it is only as we delineate the anthropological dimension of Irving's thought that the full meaning of this τέλος may be perceived.

## 2. Master - Story S1: Paradise Gained.

Men look on the starry heavens with reverence: monkeys do not.. When we are frightened by the greatness of the universe, we are (almost literally) frightened by our own shadows: for these light years and billions of centuries are mere arithmetic until the shadow of man, the poet, the maker of myth, falls upon them. I do not say we are wrong to tremble at his shadow; it is a shadow of an image of God. But if ever the vastness of matter threatens to overcross our spirits, one must remember that it is matter spiritualized which does so. To puny man, the great nebula in Andromeda owes in a sense its greatness.<sup>12</sup>

According to Judeo-Christian cosmogonies, the arrival of human being onto the platform of history announces the highest form of being in the created world. It is the culmination of the creator God's activity, after which is sabbath. For Irving, however, the creation of human being is not to be considered as complete nor as an end in itself. Rather, it finds its ultimate meaning in the Creator's purpose for creation. This purpose Irving considers heterogenously, each dimension of consideration acting as a particular facet to his theological prism, and without each, his understanding of incarnation would be misrepresented. Firstly, from a *theological* perspective, the creature is created in order that God may "find the justification of his holiness, and the upholding of it forever."<sup>13</sup> The creature exists "to bring the invisible mind of God to light" in order that God "may be seen and known in his working over creation."<sup>14</sup> Human being, therefore, is created with the express purpose of revealing "unto all the creatures the invisible and infinite substance of the Godhead,"<sup>15</sup> to "body forth God completely in all the features and powers of his invisible Godhead."<sup>16</sup> Secondly, creation has a *christological* function: the great end of creation consists for the "manifestation of the Son of God in the creature form of the risen God-man, in which to abide and act the will



of God the Father for ever,"<sup>17</sup> thus enabling the creature "to represent, to enact, and to enjoy a part of his fulness (Col.1. 15-20)."<sup>18</sup> Thirdly, there is an *anthropic* dimension: by virtue of the Creator's act of creation *ex nihilo*, the human being is being-in-dependence. It so by virtue of the humble origins of human existence, for "as He was to make it out of nothing, He would have it remember its nothingness in itself..to this single end of bringing the creature to apprehend the nothingness of its substance, and the absoluteness of its dependence upon the Divine will, which is the very truth."<sup>19</sup>

Throughout Part II we shall be considering each of these dimensions in detail. However, Irving gathers all these different but interrelated criteria are subsumed under the ultimate purpose of God in creating human being, which Irving understands in the following manner:

The purpose of God in creating man, was the manifestation and communication of His own glory unto the creatures which He had made, or which He was about to make; and to bring the creature wholly dependent upon Him, and to worship Him.<sup>20</sup>

Consequently, the *τέλος* of creation finds its ultimate meaning not in human being itself but in its contingent dependence upon the divine will which brings finite being into existence. It is being-in-relation: the creature dependent upon the Creator who is the very source of its existence and being.

We have, at this point, set the scene against which we may delineate Irving's answer to the initial questions set by Kelsey at the beginning of this chapter. Human being is created with the express purpose of revealing the glory of God. Essential to this purpose is the notion that human being is being-in-relation. But what does Irving understand to be the dynamics of this 'being-in-relation?' And in what way does Irving conceive the inter-relation between the human and the divine as a possibility in the light of our opening questions?

Irving answers both issues by means of two anthropic symbols derived from the creation-declaration in Genesis 1:27-28, wherein "God created man in



his own image, in the *image of God* he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have *dominion* over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." The divine mandate to be both image bearer and lord of creation becomes the 'charter and the law, the frame' of human being. Both expressions declare something about the divine purpose behind creating humanity, namely that God may have 'His own invisible and incomprehensible essence, and to give to this likeness of Himself the primacy and lordship of all creation.' It is of fundamental importance to Irving's anthropology that whatever history the created being assumes, it cannot thwart an anterior principle to that of creating, the will of the Creator that the 'fiat of God for human kind is that which still abideth unalterable.'<sup>21</sup>

Irving's entire theology may be interpreted as an explication of his understanding of the tensive symbolism<sup>22</sup> contained in the term *imago Dei*. The original charter of that, the first and most noble of creation, male and female, consists in the command to be 'Godlike, an image and likeness of God in the law and form of (its) being.'<sup>23</sup> In Part I, we have seen how Irving explicates the divine identity in terms of the Son as the image of the Father. This, in turn, becomes the exegetical principle by which he interprets human being as *imago Dei*. When the Creator proclaims and brings about the high end of creation, he does so not in generic terms, of conformity to a bare essence, but as that which bears witness to his Son, as the imaging forth of the Son. The human creature is an image of God after the likeness of the Son. So Irving states,

Within Himself from all eternity there was an image of Himself in the person of the Eternal Son: out of Himself that image is found in man; first in the person of Christ, and then in every one who is renewed after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness.<sup>24</sup>

From this we are able to address two aspects of his thought. Firstly, Irving maintains an inherent tension between an archaeological and a teleological interpretation of the *imago Dei*. Christ is both the ἀρχή and the τέλος of human being; that which is imaged and that which perfectly



images. As such, in imaging the Son who is the express image of the Father, human being is seen to derive its being entirely from its relation to God the Son. At this point in our inquiry, attention will be focused on the archaeological interpretation of human being.

What does it mean, though, to talk of a christocentric interpretation of the *imago Dei* in terms of its ἀρχή? It means that human being as *imago Dei* is derived from that which it mirrors. Irving can be seen as standing in a wholly Reformed interpretation of the *imago Dei* at this point. He does so primarily in terms of reflection, and secondarily, as conformity. Human being reflects the image of the Son and does so by 'conformity of an intelligent will to the will and Word of God.'<sup>25</sup> Both aspects are united in our second point of clarification, the notion of being-in-relation.

Part I has highlighted how Irving understands the Son to be the image of the invisible Father. In this sense, the concept of 'image' essentially entails the notion of reflection: the Son is the image and likeness of the invisible Father. This notion of imaging is inextricably linked to the idea of obedience on the part of the Son. However, Irving delineates this obedience in terms of the Son's dependence upon the Spirit. Thus, it is a reflection-in-dependence. If, in turn, we apply this notion of reflection to that which is the most noble of creation, we may extend to the human creature as *imago Dei* the same notion of reflection. As such, human being lacks an essential ability to perform its given created end, not merely by virtue of its finitude, but more importantly by virtue of its essential being as a finite reflection of the Son. As the Son reveals the Father in dependence with the Spirit, so the human creature has been created to reflect this being-in-dependence and attains its full humanity only in dependence upon the Spirit. Thus human being is created to exist in some way by means of a pneumatic being-in-dependence. Herein, Irving echoes Torrance's reflection on Calvin, that 'the *imago dei*, spiritually considered, has no momentum or security of its own, but depends entirely upon the grace of God and is maintained only in relation to that grace.'<sup>26</sup> Irving would add that this grace is to be understood not merely in terms of salvation, but in the very act of creation itself.



## 2.1. Imago Dei: the divine part among the earthly.

What is it that makes possible a link between the Saviour and the creature? Irving finds the point of contact in the idea of human being as being-in-reflection: as *imago Dei*. Throughout his writings, from the earliest sermons to the later apologetical writings, Irving is consistent in his insistence that human being is created as the image of God in order 'to act the divine part among earthly scenes.'<sup>27</sup> But how does Irving delineate the dynamics of such an enactment? It is at this point we are able to explicate in detail what he means by presenting his understanding of man and woman as the bearers of the image of God.

'Man,' he adumbrates most concisely in the Morning Watch, 'was created for two ends: the first, "to be an image and likeness of God;" the second, "to have dominion over the creatures."' It is upon the former that we focus our attention, which is, he continues, 'descriptive of his reasonable soul...fashioned on very purpose to be an image of God, who is Spirit; endowed with his affections of love and goodness, of truth and justice, of wisdom and understanding:...so that God without any accommodations should be able to speak his mind to man, and man without any conjecture should be able to understand it.'<sup>28</sup> Herewith, we return to the notion of *Deus loquens* and the mystery wherein the Creator speaks to and communicates with, the speaking and comprehending creature.

However, we may pause at this point to question how consistent Irving is in his description of the image: hitherto, it has been extrapolated solely in terms of the Son. It may be argued that Irving is introducing merely an alternative facet to the Son's being, namely, that the Son is not matter, but spirit. This is indeed an aspect of Irving's argument, as we shall note below, but it can hardly be the case here, for he goes on to state,

In virtue of this conformity of human reason to the infinite Spirit of God, in virtue of man's soul being an image and likeness of God, God was able to converse with Adam in the garden of Eden, as afterwards he did with Abraham and Moses, and doth with us all in his word. For the word of God is not an accommodation but a real utterance of God's mind to man's mind,



created for the very purpose of understanding and responding to God.<sup>129</sup>

In the conformity of human reason to infinite Spirit there is disclosed the *Deus loquens*. The image, therefore, does not consist of a moral propensity, nor even in the mutuality of human sexual differentiation.<sup>30</sup> Rather, Irving continues with his radical ontology of will by locating the capacity for image-bearing in the human will. It is this notion of the will that becomes the *leitmotiv* for Irving's doctrine of human being.

Intimately linked to the notion of human will as the means by which the divine and the human meet, is the notion of freedom. Human being is the image of one who is unconstrained. Consequently, the image itself cannot be constrained.<sup>31</sup> It is because 'God is free and uncaused, being the cause of himself,' that 'man must have, and hath, such a part in his will, which within the creature-bound is caused by nothing, but is of itself the cause.'<sup>32</sup> Thus Irving maintains the notion of human being as image bearer of the creator God in terms of the creature's will and its original freedom. The very constitution of human being resides in the will, whereby the human creature 'is a figure of God; the will answering to the Father, in that it is a cause unto itself, not caused by things without or motives within, but free in its proper constitution to originate all thought and action.'<sup>33</sup>

This divine freedom from causality is revealed in God's ability both to be what he wills himself to be and to remain so. This freedom from determinism, in turn, constitutes the ἀρχή of human existence. As God is perfectly free from any form of causation, so 'it is required that there should be in man, his image, a will which should be uncaused, the cause of itself; not overmastered by God, but left to act in its own liberty.'<sup>34</sup> Freedom of will in the human creature reflects the very character of God, who is himself perfectly free and uncaused.

But why this element of uncausality? Firstly, as noted above, human being is constituted according to the Creator's design, whose desire it is that the human creature should be like him, and do so by its own



volitional will, determined neither by the divine nor the human.<sup>35</sup> Secondly, and of more significance, is the derivation of the above from a purely christocentric ontology. As we have noted above, human being is being created in the image of the Son who, himself, is the image of the invisible Father. This the Son performs freely in the economy of salvation as the Christ in dependence upon the Spirit. As a consequence of being created the image bearer of this God, the human creature is created to reflect God in its willingness to serve him freely. Thirdly, freedom of will provides the means by which human being is able to establish its relation to the created order, either positively or negatively.

At this point we are able to address the means by which Irving understands this imaging by will to come about. What exactly does he understand this ontology of will to be? In order to clarify Irving's position, we can approach it from two different but complementary perspectives. Firstly, there is the relation of the divine to the human. It is created with the 'very purpose to bring the invisible mind of God to light, to be his likeness, through which he may be seen and known in his working over the creation.'<sup>36</sup> The former, as image of the latter, is understood a derivative of the latter: it is being-in-relation. Consequently, it operates in conjunction with the being of that to which it is dependent. But what is the character of that which is imaged in the human creature? Irving begins to delineate and establish the perimeters within which he furnishes his ontology with content.

Now God, being a Spirit, carrieth on his communication only through the Spirit or word, and not other wise. There his operation as God beginneth and endeth. He leaves the will of man to do the rest.<sup>37</sup>

It is because God is 'spirit and not flesh, invisible and not visible, insensible and not sensible, operating as God doth operate, by power of a word, not by physical contact,'<sup>38</sup> that the divine action with the human is an operation in the human spirit, the will. We have arrived at that which determines Irving's entire doctrine human being. Human being is contingent being; dependent upon an Other, whose operation with the material is solely by means of the spiritual. At first glance, Irving appears to be



advocating yet another bifurcated metaphysic within which the material and the spiritual are pitted one against the other. However, on closer inspection, it is an attempt to accomplish the very opposite. Rather, it is a serious attempt to give meaning to the existence of human being in light of the New Testament proclamation, wherein is maintained the affirmation of two worlds, two Adams, two states of being. Irving may be understood as exegeting this biblical tension by means of a thoroughgoing christocentric hermeneutic. He attempts to explicate the relationship between the divine and the human in a manner which gives new direction to too obfuscated an expression of human being that pits the one against the other. Irving's entire soteriology and his understanding of the incarnation may be interpreted in light of his constant affirmation that the materialised embodiment of human being is *good*. As an alternative to the notion that the human and the divine represent polarised forms of existence, Irving advocates an interpretation of human being that resists the temptation to construe salvation in terms of a flight from the material into the purely spiritual. Irving's is a high anthropology: the material is *good*. He perceives any repudiation of the materiality of human existence to be a lese-humanity, an offence against the high dignity of human being. This he does to good effect in a sermon in which he denounces those who oppose the notion of eating in the life to come, he responds by asserting,

I know what a body-despising Puritan (falsely called spiritual) generation I am speaking to; men who, not understanding the question of materialism at all, nor seeing the glory of God in it, have an ignorant prejudice against the whole subject, and a pitiful fear of it, as holding of the materialist school. Poor wits! what are you afraid of? Has not God made me with a body? and is He not to raise me again with a body? and is there not to be a new earth as well as a new heaven? What makes you so much outcry about, ye disciples of the shadowy elysium of the heathens? I would you had more reverence for God's material creation, and for man's body, creation's lord.<sup>39</sup>

In what way, however, does Irving understand the physical dimension of human existence to be consistent with such an apparently non-material view of human being? In order to answer this we turn to the manner by which Irving relates the spiritual and the material dimension of human existence in its primordial state.



## 2.2. Human Being: the *vinculum creationis*.

The ultimate primacy of *human* being over the created order, according to Irving, is to be found in its unique status. It is both *imago mundi* and *imago Dei*. As *imago Dei*, human being is 'being-with' (*Mitsein*). Consequently, it has the God-given capacity to transcend itself. As discussed above, the *imago Dei* consists in the human creature's ability to be the obedient creature amidst the purely material. As such, human being is accorded a specific destiny: to image God. In turn, it performs this destiny in and through the will.

But human being is significant not not solely in being *imago Dei*. It is also *imago mundi*. It is the one that is both able to transcend and to be immanent. Its being takes meaning only in light of the full polarity between the two: one has meaning only in light of the other. As *imago mundi* human being reflects an order of being we may describe as 'being-in' by virtue of its purely immanent situatedness. Whilst *homo sapiens* is the one with raised arm and upward gaze as an expression of that beyond itself, it is so as the one rooted inextricably in the immanent world of creation. Thus, human being is *imago mundi* by virtue of 'being-in,' for it shares in the immanence of all that is created.

Human being is both 'being-in' and 'being-with:' both immanent and transcendent. As such, it is the *vinculum creationis*. Herein lies the original design of human being: it was at first "a body of dust, and a spirit from God; by the one holding of the creature, by the other of the Creator; and so in himself forming a link between the creature and the Creator."<sup>40</sup> Having delineated the form, an ontology of will, by which Irving explicates the unique position of the human creature, we are now able to outline the dynamics by which this *vinculum* is animated and personalised. Human being performs its destiny in and through its proper and willing response to the Creator's will. The latter in turn is an operation of the Divine purely in the realm of will. This is not merely a qualification of being, but one much more of grace, for, "he would have the will of man to be recognised as the lord of all visible things."<sup>41</sup> Thus, Irving outlines the Godward identity of the human creature by use of the



tensive symbol, *imago Dei*, in order to present 'spiritual life' as 'the life of the spirit...the constant presence of a will to live so.'<sup>42</sup> In so doing, he presents not only human spirituality in terms of obedient will, but human, 'perfection in terms of one whose will, word and work is in unison with God's.'<sup>43</sup>

Yet, whilst the human will is the meeting place between the Creator and the created, the Divine and the human, it is the purely material aspect of human existence that is, for Irving, the *conditio sine qua non* by which this occurs due to the fact that 'the body is the organ by which the spirit within a man doth manifest itself to the world.'<sup>44</sup>

It is this embodied reality that for Irving manifests how the creation of the Adam surpasses the primary angelic order as the one fit to be the immanent *imago Dei*, for incorporeal being before the creation of Adam has no need of a material body in order to perfect its being: it is pure spirit, perfect in its kind. But not so with Adam, who as the nexus between the spiritual and material introduces not only an altogether new form of existence, but one that is superior to all other forms of created existence. Consequently:

The creation of Adam hath this advancement, above the creation of angels, that it includeth another kind of existence, any one substance, and any one exponent of the Divine Mind and purpose, which is the visible, as distinguished from the invisible; the corporeal, as distinguished from the incorporeal; matter, as distinguished from spirit. Hitherto there had only been invisible and incorporeal substance, which as is the soul of man; but now there is to be joined therewith a body which shall possess all material and visible things as its habitation.<sup>45</sup>

When he turns his attention to the materiality of human existence, Irving makes use of an alternative conceptuality in order to express both the self-relation and the extra-human relation of embodied human being. This he does by the complementary notion of 'dominion.' By means of the dual use of 'dominion' that Irving establishes the high dignity of human being within the immanent world of creation. On the one hand, as *imago Dei*, human being is being-under-dominion: it owes and finds its existence in an Other, the Creator God. Yet, on the other hand, it mirrors its archetype



by virtue of existing itself as a being-*in*-dominion. It is this being-in-dominion that sets the agenda for delineating the place of the human within its createdness. At all times, however, this being-in-relation is itself subsumed under an all embracing ontology of relatedness. Thus Irving asserts:

God, when He had finished His work, gave it into the charge and responsibility of man: it was man's house, for man's government; always in obedience and subservience to God - which is a condition, the absolute condition, of a creature.<sup>46</sup>

Irving moves from the purely transcendent to both the purely material and the vinculum between the two, human being. In so doing, he begins to outline a metaphysic with which he can better embrace the full scope of human being, whose being-in-relation has three distinct foci: God, self and the extra-human.<sup>47</sup> These foci, however, are not to be divided between the conceptual tools Irving uses, namely human being as '*imago Dei*' and as having 'dominion.' They are, rather, inter-related in Irving's anthropology, albeit in a very definite manner, wherein the human creature is created:

first and noblest of all, to be His own image and like-ness; but next, and only second to this, to be the heir, possessor, and lord of all His created works, to have dominion, to rule for God, to possess and to enjoy the works of His hands: this is an integrant part of man's creation; - to inherit the earth, the habitable earth; to have dominion over the beasts of the earth, the fish of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven; this, I say, upon God's own constituting Word, is as much of man's essential being as it is to be holy as God is holy, and pure as He is pure; and who is the man that dare gainsay it?<sup>48</sup>

Irving does not interpret 'dominion,' significantly, as merely a functional attribute of human being but as an *essential* quality to being human. In Adam, the archetype, human being 'stood as the head of the creation, sun, moon, and stars, and earth; the world animate and inanimate; creation's lord, who sealed up the sum full of wisdom and perfect in beauty, whom God also pronounced good.'<sup>49</sup> The created order is not given over as a mere habitation nor as a 'diversion' for Adam and his Eve. Rather, the appointment of the human creature to be creation's sovereign, carries with it immeasurable responsibility: human being has the capacity for changing creation, by means of its freedom to choose the good. Irving delineates



this ontic quality of dominion by his christocentric hermeneutic. Firstly, the idea of 'dominion' is interpreted in purely human terms. From the biblical notion of the oneness of being and substance in a plurality of persons,<sup>50</sup> he prepares the foundation for his Adamic typology. Thus he writes:

These instances of the oneness of being and substance in a plurality of persons shew out the proper mystery of manhood, as distinct from the angelic nature; whose numbers were never thus recapitulated into one person as mankind were heretofore into Adam, and the saints are hereafter to be into Christ.<sup>51</sup>

However, what is of greater importance here is the use Irving makes of this creation mandate to outline the relationship between Adam and that over which he is appointed to be sovereign. As sovereign of creation he determines the destiny of that which he tends, or, as Irving puts it, the created order 'sinks or swims...falls or rises'<sup>52</sup>, derives the quality of its being, from its human sovereign. This denotes much more an ontic rather than merely functional relation of the first human pair to that which has been given them to tend and over which they are to have dominion. It is an affirmation of human being in its relation to the created: human being in an essential relation to that which the Creator proclaims *good*. Consequently, the *function* of 'dominion' is placed in the realm of *being*, as an ontological category which is prescriptive of human being. Consequently, 'being-with-God' is not a flight from the materiality of human existence. Rather, it is a saying 'Yes' to the material: an affirmation of the divinely appointed relatedness between the Creator and his creation. The truly human, *Vere Homo*, is humanity in the image of God as rooted and grounded in its created situatedness.

This original intention of the Creator for his image bearer is revealed two dimensionally: in the human spirit to be God's likeness, and in the body to 'express every disposition of God in the government of the creatures.' This notion of the relatedness between the human and the extra-human creature helps unpack, in turn, Irving's interpretation of the *imago Dei*. It is an ontology of responsibility: 'man is the responsible creature; he only is the responsible one: all the rest are subject to him, and look up to him; not to God directly, but to man directly, and through



him their offering is to be presented to God.<sup>53</sup> The one who is 'God-breathed,' the *imago Dei*, mirrors the Divine only in its context as the one who is 'dust-formed,' the *imago mundi*. The former may distinguish the image bearer from the extra-human, but the latter underpins the context within which this imaging assumes. It is a righteousness that manifests itself not only *in* the material, but also by virtue of the material. Consequently, the material and spiritual dimensions of human existence are not polar opposites, but complementary elements of the one being. As such, Irving's doctrine of human being is a clear affirmation of the goodness of human being,<sup>54</sup> and is at all times the background out of which his explicit doctrine concerning the human nature of Christ is formed.

Thus far we have delineated Irving's anthropology in terms of its relation both to the one it images, as *imago Dei*, and to that over which it has dominion, the extra-human, the *imago mundi*. In so doing, we have investigated both the object imaged and the context within which this imaging occurs. What remains to be evinced is the relation of the subject to itself within this ontology of relatedness. It is to the dynamics of this operation that this discussion turns, namely, the self-relation of the image bearer.

What therefore is the inner dynamic by which this creature can be *vinculum* between both the created and Creator? On the one hand, Irving understands the link with the transcendent in light of the human creature's affinity with the Divine by means of its reason, or spirit. As *reasonable* being, the human creature is open to the Divine Reason of God's Word and Spirit. On the other, he posits the human link with creation by virtue of the former's own material existence. Thus, the Creator and created touch in the human creature who becomes the *vinculum creationis*. In so doing, the mind of the invisible God becomes imaged in the soul of man,<sup>55</sup> and given a visible, finite and material expression. For Irving, the human creature as God's image and King is an embodied creature. 'Man is an embodied spirit.'<sup>56</sup> This apparent dualism is explained, by Irving, in terms of a cultural analogy:

The Jew and the Christian can be as little separated as the body and spirit of a living man; and, like these two constituents of a



living man, neither can they be confused or mixed up with one another, but must be treated of as distinct, though co-essential to life.<sup>57</sup>"

However, in order to understand more fully this tension between the material and spiritual of human existence, we may turn to Irving's use of a trinal analogy with the Trinity. Firstly, as noted above, Irving understands the very constitution of human being to reside in the will. This he parallels with the Father as supreme will: by virtue of its having a will free from causality, Adam and his descendants are invested with the capacity to image the divine. The Father's will, in turn, seeks eternally to manifest itself in reason, which Irving makes analogous with the Son. The full significance of this will be discussed below when attention is turned to Irving's notion of the 'person.' Lastly, this reason must express itself through bodily form. This, Irving parallels to the Spirit's operation in 'going forth from the Father and the Word, in order to express their will and their mind in outward action.'<sup>58</sup> Irving applies his hermeneutical principle, that our cosmogony is to be derived from revelation, to his doctrine of human being. From the revelation of the trinitarian God in and through the incarnate Son, Irving extrapolates the original balance between the spiritual and material in the *imago Dei*. It is an imaging in terms of will, reason and expression. This, in turn, becomes the key to conceiving the human creature as *imago Dei*. Consequently, 'man in his constitution as a creature, is a type of the constitution of the Creator, three subsistencies in one substance, each complete and perfect in itself, yet inseparable and indivisible from one another.'<sup>59</sup>

How, therefore, does Irving understand the self-relatedness of the first human creature? At this point we may refer again to Coleridge's influence upon Irving. Both desire to present human being not as anthropology pure and simple, but as an anthropology-in-relation. In order to so do, both hold to an ontology of will which understands being in terms of 'Absolute Will.' Both understand human being as a dynamic relation in the order of being.<sup>60</sup> But Irving goes on to transcend his Coleridgean influence. His soteriological interests free him from any Coleridgean confusions and abstractions. As his context demanded both a re-interpretation and re-



orientation of the doctrine of God's being as Trinity, so, in a similar manner, his anthropology takes on a specifically 'Irving' hue as it is expounded within the context of his christological and soteriological concerns. Irving shares the concern of his contemporaries in establishing a foundation for talking about both the human and divine activity in the Christ-event.<sup>61</sup> However, his aim is to do so whilst preserving a trinitarian dynamic: of Divine and infinite Reason or Will corresponding with human and finite reason or will. Consequently, it is an moral interpretation of creation, and one which describes the dynamics of human morality in a manner that attempts to facilitate an adequate answer to how the 'infinite can be focused in the finite...and unconditioned ideal be instantiated in a historic individual.'<sup>62</sup> It is an attempt to answer such questions without falling into the anthropocentric interpretations of human being of Kant and Schleiermacher.

Irving begins by defining the circumference of human being: the flesh. 'Flesh' is the boundary of humanity. It is 'the bound and compass which God hath fixed for the definition of His creature man;' not simply the body, nor merely the soul, but the body and soul, or spirit, in unison. It denotes the visible and invisible elements of humanity existing in union with one another.<sup>63</sup> The soulish element, whilst evidently non-material, has its being by virtue of the material. The flesh, or 'flesh and blood' for Irving, delineates 'the region of the will and power of man.'<sup>64</sup> Human being is, therefore, enfleshed being, fleshly being. Yet it is at the same time supremely ensouled being, or embodied spirit. This non-material dimension to human being is the realm of the will, of reason, of conscience: the volitional, the rational, the moral. As such, Irving can talk of the soul in terms of the seat of righteousness: it has a purely moral capacity.<sup>65</sup> The human soul and its reasoning faculty, is also expressed in terms of conscience: it is the conscience or reason that the Tempter seeks to 'lull asleep.'<sup>66</sup> Alternatively, he describes Adam in purely rational terms, 'not reason, neither...flesh; but..a person endowed with reason, and responsible to God for the right use of the same. Reason and flesh, or in Scriptural language, a living soul.'<sup>67</sup>



Yet however interchangeable may be Irving's use of the terms 'soul,' 'reason' and 'conscience,' he makes a clear distinction between them and his use of 'will.' Whilst he may use 'soul' and 'spirit' interchangeably when referring to the non-material dimension of human existence, he distinguishes between the two in their relation to reason. Irving posits 'soul' as the *locus* in which human being occurs, but 'will' he understands as the *δύναμις* by which all human volition, rationality and morality occur. Thus he asserts, that as the 'will is the substance of a spirit, of an intelligent being,' so 'reason, without a will, is like a visible world without a sensible creature to possess it.' Therefore, 'the will is before reason, as the sense is before the sensible world.'<sup>68</sup> Immediately we confront the manner in which Irving expresses the relation between the material and spiritual dimensions of human being: *a reasonable will in the soul* which moves and controls the purely material form of human existence. It is human understanding, natural feeling and bodily sense operated upon by the spiritual, the will.<sup>69</sup> Thus Irving asserts:

The body of man is a noble creature of God, made to rule and command the whole of this visible world...These senses were made to possess all material things, and to be possessed by none: the creatures were but the furniture for the entertainment of man's body, and the whole earth was but as the house for it to dwell in; and as the master of the house is more noble than the house, so is the body of man more noble than this earthly tabernacle which it was destined to inherit.<sup>70</sup>

The purely material dimension to human being, as we have delineated above, thus conforms to the will. It is within this subordinated structure of human being that Irving attributes dignity to the purely material form of human existence. It is the harmony of body and soul: the *imago mundi* in conformity with the *imago Dei*; the earthly with the heavenly. It is an affirmation of the material dimension of human existence, and that which lies behind Irving's soteriological concerns. In its purely practical application, Irving is to be seen no more at his best than when he defends, in an early essay, his philosophy of education within the increasingly mechanised society. Here he argues for an all-embracing pedagogics which continues to cultivate the 'common and catholic,' against that which is increasingly specialised. His is a polemic against an increasingly materialistic anthropology wherein human nature is considered to consist



'only of five senses, four lusty limbs, and a voracious body.' It is an *apologia* for 'the old notion' that there is 'a spirit in man, and that the breath of the Almighty hath given him life, that there is a world of faith beyond the world of sight.'<sup>71</sup>

If Irving conceives of human being as consisting of '*a reasonable will in the soul* which moves and controls the purely material form of human existence,' then in what way is this *personal* being? Although this is a question he admits to having not directed his thought whilst writing his *magnum opus* on the Incarnation, nor in his earliest tracts in the flurry of opening debate,<sup>72</sup> he does address this imbalance in his preface to The Orthodox And Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord's Human Nature by 1830. Here he distinguishes between that which is common and that which is particular to the human creature. The difference between the two is described in terms of derivation:

Our personality is not given to us by Adam, but by God; and, therefore, we are responsible to God for all the actings of our personal will. But our substance is derived from Adam; we are of one substance with him, though different persons.<sup>73</sup>

The latter is that 'what man was created.' It is the community of the human 'compound nature, body and soul, flesh and reason.'<sup>74</sup> The former, that which particularises each human being, is the 'individuality or personality, that which we denominate *I myself*; and which God regards as responsible.'<sup>75</sup> Irving derives this particularising attribution to the human person from his understanding of the Incarnation in that the Son did not assume a human person/personality<sup>76</sup>.

It is of interest to note the theological implications of Irving's interpretation of human being in terms of the common and particular. Although he does not expressly say so, this interpretation of human nature parallels his previous explication of the Divine identity: that which is both common and particular to Father, Son and Spirit in their community and individuality. The nearest Irving comes at expressing an explicit correlation between the Divine and the human in terms of 'person' is in the aforementioned article in the *Morning Watch*<sup>77</sup> where he interprets human



being as a dynamic relation in the order of being, after the order of the Trinity. What is of importance here is the manner in which Irving attributes the notion of 'person' specifically to the Son:

The originating fountain of the will doth ever seek to pour itself out into the various forms of reason, which all uniting together in the personality of a man, constitute what we call *I myself*. This is the mystery, of the absolute Godhead expressing itself in the unity of Word, or Logos, who is also a person, and properly *the Person*, in whom the invisible and incomprehensible substance of the Godhead doth body itself into form, for the purposes and end of creation.<sup>77</sup>

The distinctly human person is understood to be separate from the human nature which is passed on by natural procreation. The human person, Irving asserts, is derived from God: it is 'looked on as holden from God our Creator, and ever responsible to Him.'<sup>78</sup> Throughout his discourse on the incarnation, Irving is at pains to establish the mono-personal identity of Jesus Christ: there is no distinctly *human* person assumed by the Son. What he assumes is a human nature.

What, therefore, does Irving define as the 'human person?' In what way can his be understood as a modern anthropology, in which the purely subjective agency of human being is integrated fully within his overall anthropology? It is at this point that Irving is seen both to grapple and interact with his own *Zeitgeist*. His ontology of will necessitates an interpretation of personal human being in terms of responsible agency. This Irving asserts by virtue of the priority he attributes to the role of the human will. The will is the realm of the personal: 'the personality standeth in the will.'<sup>79</sup> Yet this construction of human being in terms of responsible agency suggests an Other to whom the human bears responsibility. Consequently, although in its self-relation, human individuality expresses itself in the will, this will must do so in accordance to its own nature: as will-in-relation, obedient to the Creator.<sup>80</sup> What we arrive at is a construction of human personhood in terms of its relation to its Creator by means of willing and responsible agency.<sup>81</sup> Irving's anthropology, as such, bears greater affinity to the biblical picture where the *imago Dei* is located in the will, and interpreted in terms



of obedience.<sup>82</sup> It is an anthropology of obedience and responsibility to the God who covenants himself from Adam through Noah to Abraham, Israel and to Christ himself. Consequently, Irving constructs the essential nature of human personhood in relational concepts which reflect this underlying subordination to, yet dignity with, the Creator. These he derives from his understanding of the Christ-event: the human person stands behind all its actions, evident and living, in a manner that reflects the way in which the Father himself stands behind the actions of the Son in the economy of salvation.

In summary conclusion to his analysis of 'Paradise Gained,' therefore, Irving is seen to present an anthropology determined by the use of the two symbols, *imago Dei* and the exercise of 'dominion.' Human being is being-with-God, *imago Dei*. It is also being-in-the-world, *imago mundi*, expressed in dominion and lordship. Both are pursued through an ontology of will. Through his obedient will the first Adam is image bearer. As embodied will, Adam is the *vinculum*, the meeting point between the Divine and the created. Human being as *imago Dei*, therefore, is not primarily a statement about the creature, but an expression about its uniqueness within the context of the act of creation. In the words of Westermann:

It is not a declaration about man, but about the creation of man. The meaning can only be understood from what has preceded the creative act. The text is making a statement about an action of God who decides to create man in his image. The meaning must come from the Creation event. What God has decided to create must stand in a relationship to him. The creation of man in God's image is directed to something happening between God and man. The creator created a creature that corresponds to him, to whom he can speak, and who can hear him. It must be noted that man in the Creation narrative is a collective. Creation in the image of God is not concerned with an individual, but with mankind, the species, man. The meaning is that mankind is created so that something can happen between God and man. Mankind is created to stand before God.<sup>83</sup>

### 2.3 Human Being is in its Becoming: S1.

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to



another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. II Cor. 3:18.

Irving's ontology of will emphasizes his western, Augustinian heritage. Human being is distinguished from all other being by virtue of being *imago Dei*. As such, it belongs to the same order of being as God. The ἀρχή of human being consists in partaking of divine reality by virtue of intellect and reason.<sup>84</sup> Yet, this is not a noetic anthropology: the human spirit is not identified strictly in terms of the rational. Nor is it guilty of the self-analysis and introspection inherent in Augustine's integration of trinitarian theology with human psychology. The human self (*mens*) is not an end in itself. Rather, it finds its meaning in relation to an Other. Consequently, for Irving, the human will designates a hermeneutical rather than purely anthropological concept: it finds its meaning in the *imago Dei* which is itself derivative of that which it images.

This element in Irving's thought is not, however, the only aspect in which he appears to transcend his western heritage. Our earlier discussion focused on the teleological nature of Irving's anthropology. It is within this teleological interpretation of human being that Irving attempts to overcome the inherent hamartiological difficulties of a purely archaeological interpretation of human being. This he does by neither rejecting one for, nor pitting one against the other. Rather, he balances the two by means of a dialectic which focuses on that which each specifies about the order of creation. Firstly, in harmony with both loci, he maintains the belief that God creates all things perfect. Within this essentially archaeological and primordial state of perfection, there is assimilated the twofold destiny of human being in its intrinsic relatedness with the Creator:

It is of the nature of God to create all things perfect and blessed in their kind; and we certainly know that man was so created, and the dominion over which he ruled. There was no breach of peace amongst all the creatures over whom he held the mastery, nor between his wife and him, nor between God and his living soul, nor among the elements of creation, nor anywhere within all the bounds of his habitation.<sup>85</sup>



However, as we noted above,<sup>86</sup> creation is also a teleological act. Its *being* is derived from its intended *becoming*. The sole purpose for all that is created is that it may express a future perfection under the sovereignty of God. Human being is perfect both in its ἀρχή and its τέλος. But each state of perfection has meaning, however, only in its subsumation within the Christ-event. It is both as *imago Dei* and *imago mundi* that we may understand this dialectical use of perfection. On the one hand Adam is the perfect being as first of his human kind, as the ἀρχή of human being *within the locus of creation*. Alternatively, Adam is the one who is becoming perfect as one who stands in relation to the τέλος of human being, which, for Irving, is Christ. Therefore, the τέλος of human being is subsumed within *the locus of christology*. Irving's christology dictates his doctrine of human being. Human being is in its becoming as a type of the incarnate Son, the Christ: through him are all things created, from him does humanity derive its identity, for him it is created, of him it is the image. Its creation, fall and subsequent redemption are located in the person of the incarnate Son. The full expression of human being, therefore, is not that which is presented in Adam. Rather, it is that which is revealed in the proto-type, Christ.

It is this emphasis upon the christological dimension of Irving's anthropology that, *prima facie*, suggests an interesting divergence from his western roots. A teleological interpretation of human being implies a movement away from the West. This is certainly the case if 'western' is a synonym for 'Augustinian.' For example, he may be understood as continuing the Athanasian argument that the Creator's purpose for his creation is not thwarted by human infidelity: it is a preparation for the revelation of the Word incarnate who reveals to the creature the hidden mind of the Father.<sup>87</sup> Without this revelation, Athanasius argues, the creature would be ignorant of its Creator.<sup>88</sup> This dependence upon the revealing Word of God permeates Irving's entire thinking. It is that which specifies the entire Christ-event. The enfleshed Son reveals not only the character of God, but also that of the human. Thus, Irving stands firmly within an Athanasian orthodoxy in his stress upon the revelatory function of the incarnate Word.



But on closer inspection, there is evidence to show that although he adheres to a developmental anthropology, Irving reflects a historically sound western anthropology. Irving may be understood as both taking that which lies partly developed within his own tradition, and applying it to the debate into which he addressed himself.

In what way, therefore, does Irving extend his own tradition? This I believe he does by expanding elements he finds within the anthropologies of Irenaeus and Luther. Firstly, he parallels Irenaeus' insistence that man should be created, receive growth, be strengthened, abound, fall, recover, be glorified, and ultimately see God.<sup>89</sup> Both also insist that to taste of sin is to bring about a greater state of human being: the experience of knowing then shunning evil, produces a true human character.<sup>90</sup>

However, there are specific implications in identifying the nature of human being within a teleological anthropology: what exactly do we mean by 'human being?' If it cannot be identified in terms of a platonic ideal, or primordial proto-type, wherein lies the criterion for assessing being 'human?'

This Irving derives from his obvious knowledge of Luther's interpretation of the Genesis story. It is a derivation that can be understood as extending that which is first presented in Irenaeus then re-emerges in Luther, and given 'flesh' by Irving. Thus, when he expands his adamic anthropology, Irving can be seen as standing alongside and expanding that of Luther, as presented in his commentary on Genesis. Here, in 1:20ff, he argues for a distinction between Adam's initial createdness and that which he is to become. Whilst the first Adam lives a physical life, he is created in order to 'till the ground, not as if he were doing some irksome task and exhausting his body by toil but with supreme pleasure; not as a pastime but in obedience to God and submission to His will.'<sup>91</sup> It is indeed a paradisaal garden. For Luther, however, this is not the end of creation: 'after the physical life was to come a spiritual life.'<sup>92</sup> This clear distinction between the physical and spiritual in terms of a continuum leads us to the connection between Luther and Irving. Both temper and mould their respective anthropologies in the light of 1 Cor.



15:45,46: "'The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual which is first but the physical, and then the spiritual.' Luther interprets this passage as follows:

The first man was made a "living soul;" that is, he lived an animal life, which needs food, drink, sleep, etc. But "the second man will be renewed into the life-giving spirit"; that is, he will be a spiritual man when he reverts to the image of God. He will be similar to God in life, righteousness, holiness, wisdom, etc.<sup>93</sup>

It is this antithesis between the first man as living soul, the physical life, and the last Adam as quickening spirit, that is of importance to Irving's argument. Even so, he develops it differently from that of Luther. Luther distinguishes the first Adam from the second on the basis of his purely animal-like existence. Thus, even had Adam not sinned, 'he would still have lived a physical life in need of food, drink, rest. He would have grown, procreated, etc., until *he would have been translated by God to the spiritual life* in which he would have lived without any animal qualities.'<sup>94</sup>

It is a christological distinction, however, by which Irving distinguishes the two. At this point we are able to comment fully on Irving's doctrine of human being as *imago Dei*. Within his ontology of will he asserts that human and divine existences are of the same order of being. Yet, this is not to suggest that human being is the same essential being as the Godhead. Rather, it expresses the *quality* of analogy. The boundary of this analogy is clearly set within a trinitarian setting: although 'man was created in the image of God, he was not so in the same sense in which Christ is called "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person."<sup>95</sup> This differentiation is then given full expression in Irving's exegesis of the above Pauline passage. After having given a lengthy citation of verses forty-four through forty-nine, Irving then gives his exegesis and interpretation of the 'natural man.'<sup>96</sup> Whilst Luther denotes the adamic language generically, Irving does so specifically:

In this passage we are taught that Adam was not a spiritual creature in the sense in which we are spiritual, who are born



again of the Spirit by the quickening power of the Lord Jesus Christ: nor was he a creature in the dignity into which we are adopted by faith...Whatever distinction there is between a soul and spirit, - and such a distinction is continually preserved in Scripture, - that same distinction there is between the generation of Adam and the regeneration of Christ.<sup>97</sup>

The soteriological implications of Irving's exegesis do not concern us at this point. What is of importance to note is that he derives his understanding about the ἀρχή of human being from his christology. The first Adam he identifies in terms of 'soul.' Herein lies the primary criterion for Irving's developmental anthropology. 'In that form of being called *the soul*, after which Adam was created,' Irving argues there is 'a natural incapacity for receiving or knowing the things which the Spirit teacheth...that this is a form of being preparatory for a higher and more perfect one, which God might have perhaps have given to our first parents if they had stood faithful unto Him who created them. They were perfect in that kind in which they were created...but that kind was not of the perfectest, which yet awaited them, and to which they perhaps would have been translated if they had not fallen.'<sup>98</sup> In this form of existence Adam had little knowledge of God beyond that of Creator. Herein lies the interpretation of human being within a thoroughly trinitarian hermeneutic. In the light of both the revelation of the trinitarian God in and through Christ, and this developmental interpretation of human being, he asserts that:

Of God's spiritual being I am in great doubt whether he could have any distinct apprehension or knowledge; because Paul expressly saith, that the natural man, or the man of the soul, of which Adam was the perfect form, knoweth not the things of the Spirit of God: he could not know the Father, who is known only by the Son, who was not yet come forth from the bosom of the Father; and not knowing the Son he could not know the Spirit whose procession succeedeth that of the Son. More than the knowledge of a Creator he could not have. His being was only, if I may so speak, preparatory to a spiritual being.<sup>99</sup>

In this manner human being is presented as a dynamic and developing link between all forms of *spiritual* existence, from that of the purely immanent and created world, through the transcendent created realm of finite spirit, to that of transcendent trinitarian Being: Father, Son and Spirit. Human



being is the *vinculum* between all these forms of existence, not essentially, but derivatively. On the one hand, the human creature makes visible the invisible functions of pure spirit: both possess understanding, righteousness and love. But only through the former are these expressed within the comprehension of space and the possession of matter. Consequently, Irving understands the creation of pure spirit (angelic life) to be a type of the embodied spirit, human being. But lest we think anthropocentrically, Irving describes human being as but a type of 'that Divine form of being which Christ was to be.'<sup>100</sup> Consequently, the first Adam is a type of the second.<sup>101</sup> Herein lies the dual dignity Irving ascribes to human being: it has both a horizontal and vertical dimension. Horizontally, it is the fullest creative expression of God: all things point to the arrival of man onto the platform of history. They are but a type of the one who is image bearer. In this being meet the hitherto unrelated dimensions of spirit and matter. But to stop at this high and optimistic picture of man is not merely to misrepresent reality as it now stands, but to belittle the true source and measure of human dignity. This Irving posits within the vertical realm: it is in and through the relation of human being to the incarnate Son that he identifies the true worth of human being.

I have discussed above the primary criterion by which Irving establishes the value and worth of the human creature. This he locates within the dual appointment to be *imago Dei* and lord of creation. By means of this ontological framework Irving constructs his answer to the kind of question posed by Kelsey at the start of this chapter. Human beings are able, in their finitude, to know the infinite God by virtue of being both *imago Dei* and the form in which the full revelation of the trinitarian God would be manifested, the incarnate Son. Irving constructs his anthropology within an ontology of will and responsibility. It is an ontology of relations: human being stands in a certain relation to the Creator; it is both finite image and lord. But what are the creature's benefits in this relation with its Creator? They are expressed in the very life given to the creature.

The quality of Adam's life is a contingent not essential to being human. It is contingent upon being righteous. The will and the power to be so,



to live according to God's law, are gifts.<sup>102</sup> Even the life itself is one derived from the Life-giver. This, of course, is hardly a novel assertion: it stands at the very heart of the Adamic story; Adam and Eve were banished from Eden before they could eat of the tree of life. Rather, it is a life that receives sustenance from the Garden into which it was placed: 'not a life which could have died, not yet a life which could be pronounced immortal.'<sup>103</sup> It is a life complete according to its kind, but not an embodiment of life in its perfect state. It is incapable of having eternal life.<sup>104</sup> What is of importance here is the manner in which Irving marries this Genesis declaration about the quality of Adam's existence with a teleological interpretation of human being. The latter neutralises the inherent problem of any archaeological interpretation; namely, how to account for any subsequent inversion of the intended human vocation. How does Irving account for any such possibility? We are now at the point to give his answer to the second of Kelsey's questions: what is it about human beings that makes fallenness possible in such a radical way as to require the kind of redemption to which Christianity witnesses?

### 3. Master - Story 92: Paradise Lost.

The Word that gives expression to that which 'we cannot speak,'<sup>105</sup> which speaks and addresses, which does reveal, which does perfectly express, is the living Word that speaks into the deafening silence of exiled humanity from its primal Garden. It is the *Deus loquens* as he participates in the disrupted reality of his perfect and developing creation. Yet this reality, as experienced by each subsequent swarm of human history, stands starkly juxtaposed to the intended ἀρχή as expressed in western archaeological anthropologies. Both the human ἀρχή and its relation to any subsequent dis-ease sounds indeed, 'strange news from another star.'

It is within this context and against this tension that the anthropological significance of Irving's theology assumes its nascent meaning. How are we to interpret the human predicament? From what perspective is one to approach it? If one's diagnosis of humanity's malaise is expressed in that which is central to christology, then the full significance of Irving's



christological solution will be grasped only in its relation to his diagnosis of the human predicament.

### 3.1 Human Being is in its Becoming: §2.

It is of pivotal importance to contextualise both Irving's doctrine of human being and that of sin. Out of context, they appear crude and naïve. At face value the role of sin appears to be over-emphasized. But Irving is interacting with a very real opponent; the Socinian notion that our present existence equals that of the Adamic original. Here he reacts against the logical conclusion to an archaeological anthropology which takes lightly the eruption of sin into human history. Irving's *apologia* consists in establishing an anthropology which combats the Socinian by accounting for the fall and the need for salvation in terms that necessitate divine action. Hence his emphasis upon a developmental anthropology.

Irving's teleological anthropology presents Adam as perfect, *but incomplete*. Creation cannot have been created *perfect*, he attests, in light both of its subsequent demise and the appearance of Christ. For he argues, 'if the creation had been perfect and sufficient while yet the Christ was unconstituted, then why should there be a Christ at all? There cannot be two perfections, there cannot be two unchangeables, otherwise there were two gods.'<sup>106</sup> Adam is merely the type of Christ: creation in the unfallen state existing only to make way for creation in its fallen state. If Adam is the apex of creation, there can be no divine remedy for a fall, redemption seen to be a mere after thought, and no guarantee offered in the redeemed state against a further fall.

Eden, therefore, is created in order to show the incompleteness of human being. It is preparatory for an even higher state of finite existence. Here, Irving stands apart from the traditional Augustinian emphasis upon a 'static' cosmology. Rather, Adam's self-situatedness manifests that 'the creation, all good though it was, is not the accomplishment but only the beginning of God's purpose.'<sup>107</sup> The τέλος is delineated in light of the divine command to refrain from eating the fruit of the tree of the



knowledge of good and evil. Although Adam is created with the capacity to know such knowledge, it is not to be necessarily by willful disobedience. Irving argues for two consequences of such an epistemic state. Firstly, the teleological: it is a state higher than that of Adam's original createdness. Why? Because it is a knowledge not merely of good, but of good *and evil*. Secondly, the ontological: it is a state possessed of the Godhead itself. As such, it can hardly be an evil state. Thus, it must be a state capable of being attained by other means than that pursued by the first couple.<sup>108</sup> Consequently, Irving perceives the τέλος of human being to be not only epistemic but existential: the ability not only to distinguish between good and evil, but to choose the good, to be *imago Dei*.

In what manner, therefore, does Irving unite his notion of the τέλος of creation with a developmental metaphysic? He achieves this by the way in which he perceives God to unite himself with his creation. This notion of union is one that surfaces in Irving's thought in two pivotal areas: the cosmological and the ontological. The original creation was one wholly separate from its Creator, with little or no knowledge of spiritual life or Fatherly love. In its primal state, the creation does not reflect its intended τέλος. Rather, as interpreted through Irving's thoroughly christocentric hermeneutic,

a creation out of God was not the ultimate end of the purpose, but a creation united to God, and yet not mixed with him, through the union of a creature redeemed with the manhood taken into the person of the Son.<sup>109</sup>

We return to his central concern: creation and human being have meaning solely in and through the incarnate Son. Despite its archaeological perfection - the trees of life and knowledge of good and evil; the sufficiency of all desires; the completeness of all power; perfect love, and harmony of companionship; the presence and manifestation of God (and Satan) - 'the trees of his planting, the woman of his creating, and Satan of his permitting,'<sup>110</sup> - the perfection of creation rests not in the greatest expression of divine *fiat*, human being, but in the incarnation of the Son. The issuing forth of the Son by the Father through the Spirit, Irving asserts, is intimately associated with the development of human

being in its becoming that which the Creator intends. But it is a 'becoming' not by a return to any primal perfection. This would infer regressive and static historical consequences, for such an interpretation of the human story makes dubious the Creator's ability to maintain his creation.

Therefore, in what way and by what means does the Creator bring about this τέλος? To answer this we must explore the *hamartiological* dynamics within Irving's other interpretation of God's uniting action with his creation. This he links to the divine permission of a fall from grace.

### 3.1.1. The Act.

Irving is now able to move into the second stage of human-being-in-its-becoming. He moves his anthropology from the primary created state, that of simple goodness communicated directly by the hand of God, to the second, the Fall, the state of the knowledge of good and evil, fallen into *by disobedience*.

It was necessary that Adam should pass into a fallen state, to shadow forth Christ in the fallen state, and to this very end was paradise created with all its ordinances.'''

It is within this second state of creation that the uniting action of God is seen in an alternative mode of action, for it is a divine motivation towards an alienated creation. It is the action of the trinitarian Creator, and especially of the Father necessitated by love for his creation, pursuing it into its 'far country' in order not only to reconcile it to himself, but, according to Irving's anthropology, to bring it into its fullest and most perfect expression through the incarnated Son.

It is solely by means of both the context within which he develops his anthropology, as he contends against the Socinians,<sup>112</sup> and this developmental anthropology itself that Irving gives sense to the eruption of human sin. His hamartiology is delineated from the viewpoint of human being in its becoming that which the Creator intends. The fall of Adam does not take God by surprise. Neither does it hinder that which God



intends for his creation. Rather, it is an act of human 'disobedience both known and foreseen, and permitted by God.'<sup>113</sup> Indeed, the introduction of human *dis*-obedience into the scene of history is necessary 'as a part of the great scheme.'<sup>114</sup> It is this somewhat nervous theodicean tension between the necessity of sin on the one hand with the preclusion of divine culpability on the other that Irving grasps and makes as explicit to his doctrine of human being in its becoming in his *apologia* against the Socinians. This necessity, far from embarrassing the Godhead, is the means by which the full grace and love of God will be revealed.

Yet how can sin be necessary, whilst God have no responsibility for it? This is a question Irving does not address directly. Yet he appears to jeopardise his theodicy by the manner in which he stresses the necessity of sin. This I believe to be a fair representation of Irving unless one considers the two different but complementary perspectives by which he approaches the fall. Theologically, he defends the Godhead from any culpability on the grounds that the primal freedom of uncaused human will, and the exalted position of human being as *vinculum* between the immanent and the Transcendent, safeguard his theodicy. Teleologically, although God cannot be responsible for the fall, he permits it in order to fulfill his plan for creation. The appearance of the incarnate Son into the arena of human history as the *τέλος* of human being affirms that the fall is permitted in order to bring about this *τέλος*. However, if this latter, christocentric element to his theodicy is addressed outwith its relation to the former anthropological responsibility, Irving is not only misrepresented, but interpreted as making sin an end in itself. This is not the case. Rather, from his very earliest writings on he states the context within which any hamartiological talk should be made:

The Fall is not an origin - creation is before it: and the purpose of God in Christ is before creation, and is the true origin of all being, the true end of all revelation.<sup>115</sup>

The fall of human being is approached from two different but complementary perspectives. Firstly, the cosmological, (and the purely negative). The fall is permitted in order to distinguish the Creator from



the creature, as well as affirm the order of relatedness that exists between humanity and its Creator.

In order...to preserve distinctness between the invisible and absolute God and the visible limited creature, it was necessary that the creature should fall: and, by falling, should know the end and inferiority that is in itself; and that the goodness which it had originally, is a goodness derived from another source than itself, seeing there hath not been, in itself, the power of retaining it.'<sup>116</sup>

But Irving is at pains to show that sin is not the creation of God: it comes about by the uncaused will of the creature.'<sup>117</sup> It is that for which only an initially free will may be held responsible. It is 'a condition of the creatures' and one that reveals how inferior the creature is to the Creator.'<sup>118</sup>

In addition, Irving approaches the fall from a more positive perspective, the ontological. Firstly, the fall is permitted in order to bring about a higher form of existence. As we have noted above, it brings the creature into a knowledge of good and evil. But it also initiates the human creature to be the bearer of God's wrath against sin. Although the (inner) *Imago Dei* is deformed and the body, (the outer form), destined to death, human being remains accountable for its capacity as image bearer, for human being is not immediately consumed as a result of the fall. If this were so, human being would be a 'monument of wrath consumed' rather than a 'free-will actor of God's wrath.'<sup>119</sup> It is the God-given human capacity to overcome sin and in so doing declare God's sentence upon it that affirms the dignity of human being even in its fallen state.'<sup>120</sup>

Secondly, Irving understands the fall of Adam as preparatory to the arrival of the 'God-man' onto the scene of human history.'<sup>121</sup> If there were no fall, there could be no knowledge available to the creature of the eternal Son, neither in his offices as prophet, priest and king, nor in his names as Jesus, Christ and Lord. Consequently, within Irving's ontology, 'the fall is as essential for giving the God-man His dignity over and above the creatures, as it is for teaching the creature its distinctness from the invisible and incomprehensible Godhead.'<sup>122</sup>



But in response to whether God's purposes could have been achieved without a fall, Irving is hesitant to state, except to say that 'this was the best way of accomplishing it.'<sup>123</sup> Thus he states that, 'while I assert the necessity of sin as a part of the great scheme, I wholly disallow that any creature was made for sin, but every creature for Christ.'<sup>124</sup> The salient point here is that Irving approaches the problem of sin and its eruption into previously perfect environs not in the light of sin but of Christ, for 'the end of creation was the Christ.' But Irving implies an inherent necessity to sin, for he goes on to say, 'this is the great end and purpose of sin in the creation of God, which, if you consider it well, is as essential to the fulness of the scheme, as is creation itself.'<sup>125</sup> This necessity Irving subsumes within his doctrine of election, both universal and particular. This is not central to our discussion here, but highlight the fact that Irving does not deal with sin as an end in itself but always in its relation to the Divine intention of the incarnation. Whilst his stress upon the necessity of sin may appear to be of somewhat pessimistic, it stems from the stress he places on the appearance of Christ, as well as the importance he places upon the relatedness between the creature to Creator. It is within this context, therefore, that he resolves the 'nervous tension' between his disparate and seemingly incompatible hamartiological approaches in the concluding remarks to his article on God's method and order of revealing himself, in Morning Watch.

What we behold is not a creation destroyed, an idea of God marred or defeated; but it is a creation growing into that stable form in which it existed from the beginning in the Divine idea. Sin hath disclosed to man the guilt of a sinner, and taught him the dependence of a creature, and declared the mercy and grace of God; but it hath not interfered with God's original design of bringing a creature which should come to its glory through the way of death, as Christ cometh to his glory through the same. He would have done, and could have done it without sin and suffering to man by the ordinance of the forbidden tree, which was in effect the same prostration of the creature; but man would have the other way, of knowing good and evil, and he hath got it: but the end is plain, and the course of God is the same, and every defalcation in his creature only revealeth new funds of Divine excellency in the Creator; and so we shall see it to be unto the end.<sup>126</sup>



### 3.1.2. The Diagnosis.

Adam's act of disobedience, historicised in the Genesis account of the Fall, brings about a dislocation in human being. He is no longer the image of the *Deus loquens*. No longer is he the creature who speaks on behalf of the One imaged. Nor does he embody the truth, giving it created being above mere word. Rather, in the primal act of disobedience, the truth is exchanged for a lie and humanity becomes untrue to itself. Adam, created to be holy and righteous, denudes himself of his inheritance as lord of creation. His suffering and death become a lie against an intended order. Adam's entire being becomes a lie for, in essence, he lies 'upon God,'<sup>127</sup> betraying that for which he is created, believing a lie against the truth. As a result, he is no longer God's image nor his vice-regent.

Adam's 'untruth' or 'lie,' however, does not create any 'thing' or 'creature.' On the one hand, the lie of human being is illuminated only by the light of true being, the incarnate Light. On the other, since God alone is Creator and Absolute, the 'lie' cannot be a created thing, otherwise God would be responsible for it. The 'lie' has no life of its own, but is rather the parasitic resistance of a free creature against God. It is not a thing in itself, but 'the evil condition of thing.' It is 'a condition of the creation, proceeding from the freedom of the will of man, who was invested with creation's weal or creation's woe.'<sup>128</sup> It is a state of being: 'it is the state of a creature,- the second state of a creature.'<sup>129</sup>

What is this state? It is the state of sin. The horror of the first act that brings about this new state is manifested in its deadly consequences. It is an 'eternal and unchangeable...condition' into which the human will is brought. It is an alienation of the will from its proper disposition: 'it is a spiritual act against a Spirit, against the good and gracious Father of spirits.'<sup>130</sup> This emphasis on the will as the seat of sin, and the identification of will with spirit, supports Irving's insistence upon the irremediable consequences of the fall. When he addresses the angelic fall, a fall from a purely spiritual state of existence, he insists there can be no reconstruction of the former state of relations with the Divine: for there is no higher created state than the spiritual. Indeed, as Coleridge



states, 'if it be hard to explain how Adam fell; how much more hard to solve how purely spiritual beings could fall?'<sup>131</sup> But such an irremediable state is not the destiny of embodied spirit. What hope is there, asks Irving, for 'the will of a spirit which of its own accord hath swerved away, which did not choose to stand when all was in its favour?'<sup>132</sup> There is none, he insists. A revelation of divine omnipotence is, of itself, unable to bridge the chasm created by Adam's action. Irving's entire thrust is to show how the human predicament may be resolved only by 'the revelation of more persons than one in the Godhead.'<sup>133</sup> It comes as no surprise, therefore, that he interprets the Son's work as that of redeeming the human will from its self-inflicted bondage.

Irving goes on to distinguish between two forms of sin. What he calls 'actual sin' is sin as performed by the human person when yielding to the sinful disposition in the human nature.<sup>134</sup> But this is distinct from 'original sin.' If Irving understands 'actual sin' to be the act of a spirit or will against the One who is pure Spirit, how does he interpret original sin? This is a question he addresses most specifically in his later treatise, Christ's Holiness in Flesh, wherein he is at pains to throw light upon the character of humanity assumed by the Son in his incarnation.

*Unde malum faciamus* - whence comes the fact that we sin? Irving's answer is contained in his understanding of the doctrine of original sin. This he approaches from two complementary perspectives. Firstly, he subsumes the theological motif of 'original sin' within his all-embracing christological hermeneutic. If the Son assumes his incarnated human form by means of supernatural, not ordinary generation, and is guilty of neither *actual* nor *original* sin, then there are two possible corollaries. Firstly, original sin tells us something about the human *person*. It is a state *in* which the human person is born by virtue of natural conception. Irving qualifies this elsewhere, however, by insisting that conception by natural means is not the 'cause of our original guiltiness in God's sight.' Rather, 'it is the *sign and seal* of God's will and purpose...that we should be so concluded sinful and helpless in ourselves, to the end we might be introduced into the knowledge of his grace.'<sup>135</sup> But this is not a state into which the Son is born. Christ is guiltless of original sin due to the



manner of his virgin birth. He is not an individual like other sinful individuals because 'He is not a human person: He never had personal subsistence as a mere man.'<sup>136</sup> Secondly, it has to do with the humanly generated matter *into* which the embodied human person is born. It is sin, he concludes 'to be born as we are through ordinary generation,'<sup>137</sup> and by 'sin' here he means original sin. But what does this 'sin' mean for subsequent heirs to Adam's lot?

We turn to the other of Irving's perspectives on original sin. Here he focuses attention on the implications of Adam as the ἀρχή of human being. Irving refers to this primal state of innocence as a means of qualifying 'original sin.' Thus, if in Adam stands the creation of all human beings, that is, in him all human beings find their ἀρχή, created good and accountable for that good, then there is a collective solidarity responsible for this first act of disobedience and its consequences. For Irving, this represents one pole of human nature; our solidarity, our unity by virtue of descending from the first Adam. As such, each human being is implicated in the guilt and consequences of Adam's sin. (The other pole of humanity is its diversity, our personality; that for which each individual is held responsible due to the actions performed in the body.)<sup>138</sup> But it is in light of the initial ἀρχή, of having been created in *original righteousness*, that the subsequent state of *original sin* finds its meaning.

Original sin is the state into which every human person comes to be as a result of Adam's primal act of disobedience by virtue of natural conception and generation. The character of original sin is reflected in the fact that it is both a state to which each human being contributes by 'actual sin' and a state which is 'already there.'<sup>139</sup> Evidence for the latter Irving derives from the mortality of infants long before any act of a disobedient will. This is an important point in his argument against a Socinian anthropology in which each individual is 'in as good and perfect a state as Adam, and as able to keep the law as he was.'<sup>140</sup> Rather, it is suffering and death that proves the human creature to be fallen, and therefore distinct from Adam's original state. Remove this criterion and the distinction between fallen and unfallen, for Irving, is destroyed. 'Original sin,' therefore, denotes the collective solidarity of the human



race as derived from its father Adam. In the historical Adam we have presented the fall of one human being, who, by virtue of being head of all humanity, implicates the fallenness of all subsequent human persons. For Irving, 'original sin' is a state into which all human persons are born.

Original sin, thus, stands 'in our having been created otherwise than we now are born.'<sup>41</sup> It finds its meaning in and through the ἀρχή of human being, Adam's original state of righteousness, and is intimately united with the means of natural generation by which each subsequent human person comes to be. Thus Irving concludes his discourse on the topic of original sin;

It is the confession to our being created by a holy God, to our becoming guilty by our own act, to our needing a Redeemer; and it is the seal of our unity as a family, as one stock and one substance.'<sup>42</sup>

### 3.1.3. The Consequences.

They cannot scare me with their empty spaces  
Between stars - on stars where no human race is.  
I have it in me so much nearer home  
To scare myself with my own desert places.'<sup>43</sup>

Contemporary human identity has become a cauldron of conflicting and relativised ego-expressions jostling for a safe anchor amidst the chaos of pluriformity. As it reaches out to extend the perimeters of its knowledge and dominion, it appears to become, at the same time, more fragmented and alienated from the richness and creative profusion promised in the Eden mandate to have dominion and to prosper. It is into this context that Irving speaks, a context embraced within the Genesis story of Eden and exile, of paradise and wilderness. The Genesis presentation of creation with its order of relatedness wherein Adam is placed lord and from which he subsequently falls, with catastrophic results, is no Munchausen. It expresses that which most eloquently summarises the human story.

As a result of the Fall, human being is no longer the embodied spirit which exists creatively between two 'limiti,' as *imago Dei* and *imago mundi*, as one created and called to exist in that creative tension between the opposites of immanence and transcendence. It no longer knows the dynamic freedom of existing within its unbounded context of possibilities. Rather, it is exiled to a wilderness, losing the sense of the apophatic, of the possible. Rather, it becomes grounded in the predictable and the mediocre - of being grounded in its own fallenness and predeliction to sinning against its Creator, self and environs. As a result, the intended profusion and creativity for humanity by its Creator is exchanged for a 'desert place:' the structure of relatedness with God, self and creation is exchanged for a lie. Through time and cultural persuasion the human lot is accepted as an expression of the status quo. Ultimately, the dislocation of human being brought about by the Fall presumes 'false shadows for true substances.'<sup>144</sup> In this context, Irving's stress upon the immediacy of the Genesis story is a call to remembrance, for, he advocates, 'the truth is that men have forgotten what the fall was; and how really it is now to be perceived in every thing, without exception, pertaining to the age that is now...It is not that he who suffereth sickness hath therefore peculiarly sinned; but it is that sickness stands as the visible expression of the corruption of sin.'<sup>145</sup>

1. God-ward. Irving is adamant in his contention that the fall of Adam does not take God unawares. Adam exists in the environs of perfect relations, with his Creator, his partner, and the domain over which he exercises his lordship and expresses his creativity. He is not left alone in the Garden, but rather, is visited by and communes with the Creator. The benefits of this idyllic paradise, however, are ruptured by the first act of disobedience. Sin, for Irving, is interpreted as an act of eternal consequences. The effected act of sin cannot be separated from its personal causality: it is not a thing in itself. Such an interpretation of sin drives Irving to confront what he perceives to be the hamartiological implications of Arminianism: "'Hate the sin, but love the sinner.'" What mean they? that sin is something by itself, and the sinner something by himself, so distinct from one another, that the one may well be hated, and the other may well be loved?'<sup>146</sup> Not so, for Irving: sin is not something



to be down-played. Not only is the person the sinner but 'the substance, the dominion which these persons possess, are also sinful.'<sup>147</sup>

But how may Irving assert that the fall does not find God at unawares? Again, Irving returns to his christological ontology. Firstly, God creates man in such a manner that if he were to fall, there should be a way of return. The soulish, earthy existence of the first Adam, is preparatory for the spiritual and more perfect second Adam.<sup>148</sup> But this anthropological maxim has significance only in light of the anterior, christological assertion that such an event of falling already is accounted for. How does Irving thus argue? At this point we turn to his use of *sacrifice*. Creation is not an end in itself. Its meaning is derived from its Creator's purposes. This is the force behind his entire argument. He is not content to focus solely upon God's gracious action in atonement for sin. This for Irving is only of secondary importance. Rather, that which is of primary importance is how one may defend against committed sin.<sup>149</sup> This defence Irving finds in the significance of Christ as 'the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world,' 2 Tim. 1:9,10; Tit. 1:2.) As such, sacrifice is of a prior ontological order than creation. Its full significance is not found in an event contained within space-time boundaries. Rather, it is a consideration 'proper to God Himself..(who) is in the essence of His being the Holy One, who cannot be controverted or contradicted, and hath no indulgence of sin whatever.' Consequently, the Creator himself takes account of any subsequent indulgence of sin. Thus he argues:

Abhorrence of sin, and destruction to it, is the way of death, is an indefeasible consitution of the Godhead, ratified and made sure before creation, in order to be creation's beacon against sin.<sup>150</sup>

Although human sin has real consequences and perverts the historical inheritance of all descendants of Adam, the Creator is not impotent, nor his intentions thwarted. Of much greater import is the fact that when sin arose in the breast and mind of creation's lord, although serious as an act against the consitution of God himself, yet it was an act against that



which God himself had 'already realized and declared' within himself by virtue of the Son's obedience to be the slain Lamb.<sup>151</sup>

#### ii. Self-ward.

The light of the divine word brings sin into view. What does the Christian understand by sin? Sin is primarily a metaphysical phenomenon whose roots lie in the mystic depths of man's spiritual nature. The essence of sin consists not in the infringement of ethical standards but in a falling away from the divine eternal life for which man was made and to which, by his very nature, he is called. Sin is committed first of all in the secret depths of the human spirit but its consequences distort the whole individual. A sin will reflect on a man's psychological and physical condition, on his outward appearance, on his personal destiny. Sin will, inevitably, pass beyond the boundaries of the sinner's own life to burden all humanity and thus affect the fate of the whole world. The sin of our forefather Adam was not the only sin of cosmic significance. Every sin, secret or manifest, committed by each one of us, has a bearing on the rest of the universe.<sup>152</sup>

Irving stands resolutely within the stream of Christian tradition which, like that expressed by the Archimandrite above, asserts that a radical inversion of human being has occurred. Alongside the noblesse of human being exists the pitiable squalor of its brokenness. Hope may spring eternal in the human breast, according to Arnold, but it is a hope all too dismembered by our common lot, so cynically expressed by Parker, to be the food of worms. We strive heavenward to transcend our earthbound existence like condemned creatures, too willing to exchange one cage for another in the hope of gaining utterance of the unutterable or rest from or for our restless spirits.

Irving's favourite allusion for expressing the human plight is the story of Aeschylus' Prometheus. Herein Irving finds expressed most beautifully the present bondage of the human will. Prometheus is identified with Adam: both possess souls that once were free but have come into bondage; and both are assailed by tormentors. But Prometheus, for Irving, presents the high dignity of humanity in its refusal to give in utterly to the dark forces of the purely earthly and material. He is a presentation of the human soul facing torment and temptation, which holds out in hope of a



better form of existence. Prometheus is the 'will enduring the bondage of all the creation, and groaning within itself, waiting for the redemption of the body, and meanwhile saved by hope, and in the strength of that hope preferring its bondage to all the power and liberty which is contained within the bounds of creation under its present laws.'<sup>53</sup> Herein is the object and content of the human oppression: 'Who is in captivity?' The human will. 'What is the bondage?' The oppression of the devil, the world and the flesh. 'What is the redemption?' The deliverance of the human will from its bondage.'<sup>54</sup>

Irving seeks to explain the dynamics of sin both in terms of the creature's place within creation, and in terms of an ontology of will. The former explains how Adam's sin brings about a new state of being. It is a fall from the highest and most noble of human parts, the personality.'<sup>55</sup> Through the person sin enters the mind, takes hold of the body, and then through the body to those creature's placed to serve him, until through them to the earth itself.'<sup>56</sup> In this manner, Adam loses his lordship to that which has authority over him, and expresses itself through his bodily members. It is a fall from the most noble of human parts, the personality.

The latter, this inversion of being, results in a drastic reversal in the manner by which the human will operates. Whilst Adam relates in obedience with his Creator God, there is a harmonious relation not only between God and Adam, but also between his will and body, between his reason and understanding. But his act of disobedience necessitates a reversal in this relationship between will and body. No longer is Adam able to respond in his will and reason to the Divine Will and Reason. Rather, Adam's will is enslaved to his understanding, natural feelings or bodily senses. Consequently, God's revelation to embodied spirit no longer meets and relates to the entire person, but merely to 'different parts of the natural man.' There results not only a bondage of will but a blindness in spiritual perception, for God's revelation becomes restricted to the senses, feelings or understanding. For Irving, therefore, bondage of the will represents a falling into a state of pure immanence; a state of existence in which Adam becomes bound to the influences of the purely physical, animal or material.'<sup>57</sup> This is the lie, the untruth of human being. It is



a 'No' to all that it is created to image. At worst it is an expression of the diabolical, at best, *imago mundi*, but even here, an image of the earthy which itself suffers due to its relatedness to its primal lord.

iii. Creation-ward. The modern mind suspects a somewhat nervous tension in maintaining a relation between the human and the created order. Is it not obvious that human being is of a different order of being? Are not our environs, if not indiscriminately thought of as the means of eternal resources that which we may exploit to our own end? The modern world-view, with its blatant denial of the order of being and the finitude of the created order, may be understood as the modern expression of the diabolical. The outcome of our erroneous cosmology confronts us, eventually with the stark reality that created order is becoming that which it should not.

But the concern with the ecological becomes a redundant activity on its own. What basis is there that gives the extra-human significance and meaning? For Irving it is the theological significance derived from the Genesis story and the creation mandate that Adam both prosper and have dominion. Yet Irving is seen to be dissatisfied in leaving the discussion at this level. Much more importantly, he wishes to establish a metaphysic within which the ontological significance of creation may be affirmed both in relation to its origins and in light of its creator's intention. This, we have seen, he derives from an ontology of derivation. Firstly, the significance of human being is derived from the place given to it by the Creator: as *imago Dei*. But human being also derives its significance from the role it plays in being called to have dominion over the extra-human creation. It is called into the partnership of vice-regency with the supreme Lord. Secondly, and as a corollary of this, the extra-human derives its meaning from its relation to the one under whom it stands in the created order. Creation stands or falls with its appointed lord: it derives its order of being from the quality of that possessed by human being. In its primal stages, creation stands harmoniously in relation to its lord: it is possessed of one who stands harmoniously with his Lord.



The Fall, however, reverses this order of being. The 'fine gold of Adam's dust'<sup>158</sup> is exchanged for a lie, and in so doing, creation is denied its two great desires; to see God and be able to name his name by virtue of its created lord.<sup>159</sup> Rather than being the idyllic setting for human innocence, 'the world, by the first transgression, hath become the free stage for the controversy between good and evil.'<sup>160</sup> Through the human act of disobedience the created order experiences the tension, turmoil and dislocation brought about in becoming the context within which human being becomes elevated above the mediocrity of sin. As we have seen, Irving's ontology facilitates this radical inversion in the mode of human being. Irving understands human being in light of its τέλος: human being is in its becoming. When Adam falls, he falls not into total isolation from his Creator. Although he comes to know and experience as intimately his own the mediocrity of sin, it is a knowledge that is itself contained within the canopy of God's grace and sovereignty. Adam falls from his creation state into another constitution; 'the gospel by the promise,' namely, that 'he, and all his children...should exercise faith and hope upon Him that was to come.'<sup>161</sup>

The Fall serves as a preparation for that which is to come: Adam, the living soul, falls into the earthy, allowed so to do in order that he be raised up to the spiritual.<sup>162</sup> As a result of Adam's disobedience both he, his heirs and the setting in which human history is accomplished become participants in the anticipation in which all creation is immersed. It is within this order of being that the extra-human of creation waits in anticipation. It is an order of created being in which the human derives its value and meaning as *personal*, and the extra-human its value as meaningful and significant not in its relation to any primal αρχή, but via Christ. Both receive personal identity and ontological particularity by being placed in relation to the incarnate Son.<sup>163</sup>

It is this christological emphasis that pervades Irving's entire doctrine of human being. Human being is in its becoming: in its becoming conformed to the image of the image of God. By means of his christocentric hermeneutic, Irving establishes a means of bringing together divine being and human being in incarnation. What has been of significance in both



Parts I and II is the fact that whilst Irving maintains a thoroughgoing christocentric hermeneutic, it is one that holds together only by virtue of its *pneumatic* dimension, in light of the place of the Spirit in both human and divine being. The significance of this is not to be missed, for despite his pneumatic understanding of incarnation, and consequently the being of God, Irving does not allow it to dictate his perception of Jesus Christ. At all times, the subject of the Christ-event is the eternal Son of God, who is the object of the hope exercised and anticipated by fallen creation.

And now, thenceforward, all heaven and earth looked forward for the Man, by eminancy called THE SON OF MAN; that is, the child for whom manhood was created, and through whom the great secret was to be revealed, and the Divine nature for ever manifested in an outward form;- which was, as it were, the great deliverance for which the womb of all creation had longed, and made an empty and abortive effort to produce it at the birth of Adam, when things were not yet ripe for hte great discovery...It was the purpose and decree of God, promulgated from the foundation of the world, and gradually growing into manifestation by slow degree and manifold pangs of creation, according to the importance, the infinite and all-comprehending importance, of the issues which rested with it. For...the nucleus of the whole scheme, the great end and first beginning of all: and that which went before was but the germination of the seed before it appears above the earth, or the preparing of the soil for the casting of the seed into the earth. And so God, and angels, and men, and devils, and whatever else existeth, all looked forward to the Man in whose outward from the Godhead was to become eternally manifest. For that in man it was to be manifest, God himself had purposed from all eternity; and the angels, no doubt, had heard the rumour of it; wherefore the morning stars sang together, and the angels of God shouted at His birth: and Satan, with his apostacy, had also heard a rumour of it, wherefore he solicited Him with his wiles to forsake His allegiance: and the knowledge was kept alive, amongst the sons of men, by every revelation made to the patriarchs and the prophets; until at length in Bethlehem, in the stable of Bethlehem,- fit emblem of the world into which He was born, - the child of infinite hopes and longings was brought into being: whereupon instantly the heavenly host waked all their choral symphonies, and sang, "Glory to God in the highest; peace on earth, and good will to the children of men".<sup>164</sup>



#### 4. FOOTNOTES.

1. Tertullian: On the Flesh of Christ. The Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. III, Buffalo: The Christian Literature Publishing Co, 1885, p530.
2. 1 John 1:1,3.
3. K. Ware: "The Unity of Human Person According the the Greek Fathers," in Persons and Personality. A Contemporary Inquiry. Eds. A. Peacocke, G. Gillett, Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1987, pp197-206.
4. Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion, 1.1.1., Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960, p35.
5. K. Barth: Church Dogmatics, 3.11.73. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1960.
6. See D.W. Dorries' unpublished doctoral thesis, 'Nineteenth Century British Christological Controversy, Centring Upon Edward Irving's Doctrine of Christ's Human Nature. University of Aberdeen, 1987. Dorries presents overwhelming evidence from Patristic to Reformation thought that Irving's doctrine of the humanity of Christ is consistent with what has preceded him and accepted as orthodox, whether eastern or western. Although at times Dorries' pushes his data to imply more than I think the writers themselves are saying, (p173 (Irenaeus), 203, 207, 210 (Cappadocians), 222, 226 (Cyril of Alexandria), his thesis is a bulwark in Irving research and one that establishes superlatively both the orthodoxy and credibility of Irving's christology, as well as showing how deliberately misrepresented and misunderstood was his thinking.
7. D.H. Kelsey: Christian Theology. Eds. P. Hodgson, R. King. London: SPCK, 1983, p141.
8. Herman Hesse: 'Merkwürdige Nachricht von einem andern Stern.' Strange News from Another Star & Other Tales. Trans. J. Wright. New York: Farrar, Strava & Groux, 1972.
9. Cited in, D.J. Hall: Imaging God: Dominion as Stewardship. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986, p204.
10. CW.1: 73-74.
11. op cit: 331.
12. C.S. Lewis: God in the Dock. Glasgow: William Collins' Sons & Co Ltd, 1979, p31. Lewis' sentiments reiterate those of seventh century Leontius of Cyprus: 'Creation does not venerate the Maker through itself directly, but it is through me that the heavens declare the glory of God, through me the moon worships God, through me the stars glorify him, through me the waters and showers of rain, the dew and all creation, venerate God and give him glory.' PGXCIII. 1604B, cited in Ware, op cit. 204.

13. CHF: 116.
14. op cit: 14.
15. MW.7: 52.
16. CHF: 116.
17. MW.7: 60.
18. MW.5: 386.
19. CW.5: 239.
20. ibid.
21. PW.2: 151.
22. I am indebted to Sally E. Alsford's unpublished Ph.d. thesis, Sin as a Problem of Twentieth Century Systematic Theology, University of Durham, 1987, for insights into the meaning of symbol as a 'tensive symbol.' Alsford uses 'tensive symbol' solely in relation to Paul Ricoeur's doctrine of original sin, and defines it as 'an idea or doctrine which collects (and thus to some extent simplifies) and represents a range of meanings and issues,' (p282.) I would wish to extend this and argue that the biblical notions of *imago Dei* and dominion serve the same purpose. It is as we rediscover the rich analogical wealth expressed in such symbols that the biblical presentation of human being may be rediscovered.
23. PW.2: 411.
24. op cit: 382.
25. T.F. Torrance: Calvin's Doctrine of Man. London: Lutterworth Press, 1952, p80.
26. ibid.
27. OG: 78.
28. MW.5: 387.
29. op cit: 388.
30. K. Barth: Church Dogmatics, III.i.183f, 1958.
31. PW.2: 12. Note the similarity with eastern interpretations of human being, for instance, Theophilus of Antioch:

Man is in his nature neither mortal nor immortal. If he had been from the beginning created immortal he would have been as God. On the other hand, if he had been created mortal then it follows that God would have been responsible for his death. Therefore,



he was not created either mortal or immortal, but capable of either. (*Ad Autolyicum* 11.27).

Cited in N. El-Khoury, "Anthropological Concepts in the School of Antioch," in *Studia Patristica*, XVII, Part II, Ed. E.A. Livingstone, Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1982, pp1359-1365, p1363.

32. CHF: 116.

33. MW.7: 60.

34. MW.5: 388.

35. *ibid.*

36. CHF: 14.

37. *ibid.*

38. CHF: 104.

39. PW.1: 313.

40. CHF: 20.

41. *op cit*: 14. See also, M. Gervase, *Byzantine Aesthetics*, p23, (cited in A.M. Allchin: *Sacrament & Image*, (Introduction), Fellowship of St. Alban & St. Sergius<sup>2</sup>, 1987).

Because man is body he shares in the material world around him, which passes within him through his sense perceptions. Because man is mind he belongs to the world of higher reality and pure spirit. Because he is both, he is in Cyril of Alexandria's phrase "God's crowned image"; he can mould and manipulate the material and make it articulate.

42. *op cit*: 39.

43. CHF: 20.

44. CW.5: 454.

45. MW.7: 54.

46. PW.2: 413.

47. Hall, *op cit.* p132, p127.

48. PW.2: 412.

49. MW.7: 63.

50. Rom.5:12-21; 1 Cor.15:20-21.

51. MW.7: 62.
52. PW.2: 382.
53. *ibid.*
54. T.F. Torrance: "The Goodness and Dignity of Man in the Christian Tradition," Modern Theology 4:4, 1988, pp309-322.
55. CHF: 20.
56. CW.5: 449.
57. Lectures on the Book of Revelation, London: Baldwin and Cradock, 1829, Lecture 1, p51.
58. MW.7: 60.
59. *op cit*: 61.
60. J.M. Boulger, Coleridge As Religious Thinker, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961, pp225-6.
61. E. TeSelle (Christ in Conflict. Divine Purpose & Human Possibility, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975) presents three relatively contemporaneous views with Irving of Christ as the archetype of humanity. Kant, he presents as representing a 'first article' Christology wherein Christ, the ideal, is that against which human beings are pitted and seen to fail. Schleiermacher represents a 'second article' Christology, where Jesus of Nazareth represents the ideal and perfect expression of religious Christian consciousness. Lastly, and that which Teselle vindicates, is Hegel's 'third article' Christology which TeSelle presents as that which transforms human life whilst not being dependent necessarily upon the historical Jesus of Nazareth.
62. TeSelle: *ibid.* 118.
63. PW.1: 345.
64. CW.1: 538.
65. CHF: 104.
66. CW.1: 218. See also PW.1: 333.
67. PW.2: 209.
68. CW.5: 425.
69. *op cit*: 52.
70. CW.1: 221.



71. Extracts From a Sermon on Education, (preached 1825). Glasgow: Maurice Ogle & Son, 1854, p27.
72. OCD ix. Here Irving delineates his later thought on the question of Christ's personality, after having admitted that he had not addressed the question of Christ's human personality, and him being a human person in his major christological treatise, The Incarnation, (CW5).
73. CW.2: 538.
74. OCD: ix
75. *ibid*.
76. Irving does not make a distinction between the two: MW.7: 60-61. This will be discussed in the following chapter where discussion focuses purely on Irving's christology.
77. MW.7: 60-61.
78. PW.2: 209.
79. CHF: 63.
80. Boulger *op cit*. 225-226.
81. J. Macmurray: The Self As Agent, London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1957, Persons in Relation, London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1961. Macmurray's anthropology, as expressed in his critique of Kantian and post-Kantian perceptions of 'person' touches, at points, that of Irving. Since error in theory implicates failure in practice, our misconception of what it means to be a 'person' derived from the noetic, Cartesian verification of existence can lead only to a misconception of our own reality, (PR: 149.) The 'person' is not derived from a science of mind, but by agency. It is practical. In this sense, Kant highlights the practical dimension of reason. But the premis, that reason is primarily theoretical, contradicts the conclusion, that reason is primarily practical, (SA: 62-85.) Such a contradiction, contends Macmurray, entraps the 'practical' within the mind, and can do no justice to religious experience, (SA: 63.) Macmurray argues for an understanding of the human person in terms of Self-as-Agent and Self-As-Subject, incorporating the bodily and mental differentia of human being. Whilst both appear to be mutually exclusive, they are of pivotal importance in describing what is the human 'person,' (SA: 95-98.) In 'Persons in Relation' Macmurray seeks to transfer the centre of human reference away from the mind to the body as a means of affirming the personal, (12.) In so doing, there is a shift from the solely subjective and negative, Self-As-Subject, to a fuller embracing of the human, as embodied Self-As-Agent. The ego-entrapped 'thinker' becomes 'person' in relation to other embodied, thinking beings.

Macmurray stands in the same tradition as Irenaeus, Luther, Irving in his assertion the human personhood comes about through the rhythm of



what he calls 'Withdrawal and Return,' (86-105.) Human personhood does not exist 'at an instant.' It is the ongoing product of action generated in time. Human personhood is the process of personal development, the human effort of discerning what is good and bad, helpful or unhelpful, real or false, (107-108.) Such a process implies the theological, for it is an attempt to determine the personal not by any existential or logically unfounded 'leap' from 'pure' reason to the 'practical.' Such a metaphysic is doomed to the impersonal. From the standpoint of the agent, the quest for the personal demands not asking whether the world is personal or not, but whether God exists or not. However, in order to determine whether our view of reality is or is not adequate, we must ask, not if God exists, but 'is what exists personal?' (PR: 214-216.) What is of interest in Macmurray is the assertion that such knowledge is not derived from personal intuition, but from action. In this he parallels Irving: both agree that the personal is derived from a personal Creator who is objectively 'there.' However, both would part company at the deeper level from which the respective ontologies develop, for although Macmurray wishes to argue for the personal on the basis of the theistic, he does not delineate the criteria by which he may assume that the theistic is *personal* except that it cannot be *pantheistic*, (PR: 223). Irving, alternatively, is at his most fluent when stating his criteria.

Theology, or Divinity, hath no other aim than to make known to the reason of man, the one living and true God; who is no where seen, but in the face of Jesus Christ. If the word of God itself be only the Spirit taking of the fulness of Christ, and showing it in all possible forms and varieties to the mind and heart of man, what else ought the system of theology to be, than an endeavour of the Church to give the same subject, the only subject, even Christ, such a form and representation as may be profitable to every day and generation of men. If they pretend to teach any thing besides Christ, they pretend to teach what is beside and beyond the comprehension of man: for in Christ all that can be comprehended of God is summed up. If they think that any thing is taught of God, without teaching Christ, or any thing apprehended of God, otherwise than by apprehending it in Christ, they err grievously, subverting the foundation of truth, and rebuilding up a fabric of speculation which hath no reality; of falsehood, which hath no being. For example, the words *election*, *effectual calling*, *redemption*, *justification*, *sanctification*, *adoption*, &c. have no religious meaning, nor power of truth in them, till they are referred to Christ, and understood as revealing certain features of His character, certain parts of His fulness, which is the fulness and character of God. They are mere verbiage, idle and unmeaning words, worthless, and worse than worthless terms, until they have been expounded in the person of Christ, and seen alive in Him, and felt as revealing something of the living and true God. And they will profit no man's soul, in the way of morality and religion, until they have been so re-collected into the person of Christ, and seen in living vital action in His glorious work. Religion is the commerce and intercourse of an intelligent creature with an intelligible God, of



an accountable creature with a holy, governing, and judging God; it is the transaction of a person with a person, not of a person with words, nor yet things, but with God, who gives Himself forth in word first of all, that afterwards that word may become flesh, living flesh; so that in learning words we have learned nothing, unless we make them flesh, living flesh. The Scripture is all alive with personality: systems of theology are altogether, or almost emptied of it.

82. 1 Peter 1:1.

83. C. Westermann: Creation, Trans, J.J. Scullion, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974, p56. Cited in Hall, op cit73.

84. See Sermon on Education, op cit: 8. Here Irving outlines the three original capacities of the soul, held by all human beings to greater or lesser degrees. Firstly, there is *scientific* knowledge and understanding whereby we know and understand the natural world by means of our five senses as explored and examined by our understanding. Secondly, there is *personal* knowledge: the capacity of self-understanding, conscience, moral judgement, psychology, social relations of family and government, all of which Irving identifies as 'all that inward activity of spirit, and outward condition of life, which distinguishes man from the lower creatures,'(p8). Thirdly, there is *spiritual* knowledge, 'the power of knowing, and worshipping, and obeying the true God.' Only a form of education which gives place and dignity to each of thee respective areas of human activity and knowledge is 'liberal, catholic, and complete,'(ibid).

85. CW.5: 322.

86. CW.1: 73-74. FNP4

87. Athanasius: The Incarnation of the Word of God. London: Geoffrey Bles, The Centenary Press, 1944, 8954, p93.

88. op cit: 3911, pp37-38.

89. Irenaeus: Against Heresies. IV.xxviii.3. Ante-Nicene Christian Library, vol.V, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1880.

90. op cit. III.xx.2; IV.xxxix.2; V.iii.1.

91. Luther: Commentary on Genesis. XLII, 48, 49. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958.

92. ibid.

93. ibid.

94. op cit: 65, 66, p86.

95. CW.5: 80.

96. The translation from which Irving works is as follows:

It is sown a natural body, (or a body proper to a soul,) it is raised a spiritual body, (or a body proper to a spirit:) there is a natural (soulish) body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul, the second Adam a life-giving Spirit. Howbeit, that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is of the soul: and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from Heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, so we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

97. CW.5: 81.

98. *ibid.*

99. *op cit*: 82.

100. *op cit*: 93.

101. See Ben Ezra, cxxxxff for a detailed outline of Irving's presentation of Christ as Prophet, Priest and King. Also, CW.5: 81.

102. CS: 13.

103. MW.7: 302.

104. CW.5: 416.

105. See opening quote from T.Wolfe: Of Time and the River, fn. 1, Part I.

106. CW.5: 98.

107. MW.7: 63.

108. Although Irving is never explicit about this in his writings, it is a logical implication from his teleological anthropology.

109. MW.7: 63.

110. *op cit*: 64.

111. *ibid.*

112. An anti-trinitarian group which began with Italian, Faustus Pavolo Sozzini (1539-1604). Sozzini believed humanity is mortal by nature, eternal life being a gift from God for the righteous who alone will be resurrected. Sozzini believed that Christ is not divine by nature but only through his offices, that divinity can be attributed to him, but not divine nature. Thus, the doctrine of the three offices of Christ is central to Socinian theology, (and one which Irving vehemently defends in terms of divine *nature*, and not



divinity alone.) Harnack summarises Socinian doctrine of Christ as that in which 'Christ has perfectly revealed to us the divine will,' (History of Dogma, vol.VII, London: Williams & Norgate, 1899).

113. CW.5: 10.

114. op cit: 103.

115. LD: 499.

116. CW.5: 419. Also, CW.5: 239.

117. CW.5: 10.

118. op cit: 99, 239.

119. PW.2: 153.

120. This, for Irving is only a possibility because there is an order of being prior to that of creation, namely, sacrifice. It is because creation has its being and meaning in and through the Lamb slain before the creation of the world that not only is sin already accounted for in its relation to a holy creator, but that the character of God is vindicated before any violation or offence occurs.

121. CW.5: 91.

122. op cit: 423.

123. op cit: 203.

124. op cit: 103.

125. op cit: 98.

126. MW.5: 394. Italics mine. Note that this is not a return to the original form, but to the will of the Creator.

127. OCLHN: 63.

128. PW.2: 405.

129. CW.5: 218.

130. op cit: 18.

131. S.T. Coleridge, Literary Remains, vol.3, London: William Pickering, 1883, p330.

132. CW.5: 18.

133. *ibid*.

134. OCD: x.

135. op cit: 84, 85.

136. CW.5: 159.

137. CHF: 3.

138. op cit: 56.

139. See fn 22 for 'tensive symbol.' P. Ricoeur: "'Original Sin:" A Study in Meaning,' in The Conflict of Interpretations. Essays in Hermeneutics, ed. D. Thole, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974. Sin is a rational symbol declaring the radical nature of sin. It is more true to say that sin is something which 'inhabits' human being than to say that human being 'commits' sin, (p283). It is interesting to note how Irving and Ricoeur give similar meaning to the mysterious aspect of evil, to the dual character of sin: that we *inaugurate* evil (*actual* sin), but also *find* it (*original* sin).

The Adamic myth reveals at the same time this mysterious aspect of evil, namely, that if any one of us initiates evil, inaugurates it...each of us also *discovers* evil, finds it already there, in himself, outside himself, and before himself...For every consciousness which awakens when responsibility is taken, evil is *already there*. In tracing back the origin of evil to a distant ancestor, the myth discovers the situation of every man: evil has already taken place. I do not begin evil; I continue it. I am implicated in evil. (ibid).

Like Irving he asserts that 'sin is not a something, but a subversion of a relation.' ("The Hermeneutics of Symbols: 1," op cit. p303.) Both Irving and Ricoeur denounce any attempt to belittle the significance of sin by suggesting its 'non-being.' It has being in that it is the subversion of an intended objective reality, a reality which refuses to be thwarted by sin, but overcomes only by grace. It is in light of both Irving's and Ricoeur's interpretation of sin, both *actual* and *original*, *inaugurated* and *found*, that any hamartiological obscuring between human nature and human personhood in relation to the saving work of Christ is contested. If we proclaim humanity to be taken into Christ's new humanity solely by virtue of the Son's assumption and subsequent vindication of human nature there are three important corollaries. Firstly, we undermine the inherent *personal* dynamic of sin. Sin is not an abstract, spiritual commodity removed impersonally by Christ. Rather, it is an inadequate mode of being, an offensive form of relating rooted in the dark and conscious veering of a will out of relation with its Creator God. Secondly, we remove the inherent contradiction of sin: the tension between sin as 'already there' and human freedom and responsibility of action. Thirdly, and of crucial importance both to the doctrines of God and Christ, we confuse the distinction between the human person and human nature. Any vindication of the latter at the expense of the former undermines the church's hamartiological tradition of affirming we are both responsible for our own (*actual*) sin as well as the mode of being (*original* sin) into which each of us is born. Only a christology that meets with and resolves both characteristics of the tensive symbolism



of sin can be deemed relevant to the human predicament. Any other is, for Irving, a characterless and impersonal form of religion.

140. CW.5: 214.

141. CHF: 4.

142. op cit: 5.

143. Robert Frost, 'Desert Places,' The Poetry of Robert Frost, London: Jonothan Cape, 1976, p296.

144. W. Shakespeare, Titus Andronicus, Act 3, scene 2.

145. CW.5: 43.

146. op cit: 107.

147. OCD: 133.

148. CW.5: 80-86.

149. PW.2: 165.

150. *ibid*.

151. op cit: 164-165.

152. Archimandrite Sophrony: The Monk of Mount Athos. London: Mowbrays, 1973, p22.

153. CW.5: 567.

154. OCD: 89.

155. op cit: 132.

156. CW.5: 322.

157. op cit: 52.

158. CW.5: 116.

159. op cit. 84.

160. MW.5: 393.

161. CW.5: 324.

162. op cit. 86, 90.

163. See fn 120.

164. CW.5: 84-86.

PART III: IRVING'S DOCTRINE OF CHRIST.



## 1. INTRODUCTION.

As one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous. (Rom.5:18-19)

Foundational to any proclamation of the Christian Gospel is the belief that through the person and work of Christ the capacity for human waywardness and rebellion against its Creator has not merely been arrested, but has been replaced by a capacity for obedience and relatedness. God, in Christ, has reconciled a fallen world unto himself: the dynamics of such a reconciliation being rightly understood, by and large, within a *theologia crucis*, a theology dominated by the passion, crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Without the crucified and risen Christ, we can do nothing. This is the theological paradigm by which the historic Church has sought to understand its faith. Thus, greater significance has been accorded some interpretations than others, which in turn have moulded the future development of theological thinking, as we have noted throughout Parts I and II. The great christological debates of early Christendom moulded the character of subsequent Christian doctrine. In so doing the early Fathers established a theological paradigm which whilst preserving the uniqueness of Christ did so in a manner that precluded any meaningful parallel development of the doctrine of the Spirit.

There are three possible responses to such a statement. Firstly, that it is a wrong interpretation of theological history and therefore not worth pursuing. It is hoped, however, that this is not a valid criticism and that we are justified in considering one of two alternative responses: that, firstly, if this is a valid statement, we are justified in dismissing the entire corpus of Patristic thinking as obsolete and irrelevant; or, secondly, that it should act as a stimulus to creative exploration and expansion of the tradition we inherit but believe to be deficient in a given area, in the hope that in so doing we add to the corpus of faith held by the Church. This latter response is that which I believe to be the most adequate. Therefore, when we turn to consider Irving's christology,



we bear this response in mind: that he seeks to bring out that which is *already there* within the historical affirmation of faith. It should come as no surprise by this stage in our discussion, that the manner by which the person and work of Christ will be advanced in any meaningful manner is, for Irving, intimately related to the less developed doctrine of the Spirit.

In Parts I and II, I have sought to show where Irving locates the person of the Spirit in relation to the being of God and human being. This method is foundational to the present thesis for two reasons. Firstly, the nature of theological development: for in his appreciation of the person and work of the Spirit, Irving expands his theological paradigm to incorporate a more dynamic and explicit pneumatic dimension. In so doing, his christology becomes relevant in the manner by which we may understand better the being of God as Trinity, the person and work of Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, and the dynamics of spiritual life to which human being is called in light of incarnation. Secondly, such a method provides a foundation for presenting more clearly an understanding of the relevance of Christ. The intention in Part III is to show how Irving unites the two in his christology, wherein the being of God and human being meet in intimate and personal union in incarnation. Therefore Irving's christology is the explicit concern of Part III, and in particular, his understanding of the humanity of Christ both in its relation to the being of God, and to the teleological character Irving attributes to human being which is well accommodated by Merton's sentiment regarding the nature of human dignity:

Souls are like athletes, that need opponents worthy of them, if they are to be tried and extended and pushed to the full of their powers, and rewarded according to their capacity.<sup>1</sup>

Irving's anthropology is typified by his belief that human being is in its becoming: and becomes so only in so far as it stands against, battles with and seeks to overcome all that stands in its path to actualisation. It is that which ought, surely, to characterise any spirituality founded upon the Christian kerygma: a becoming 'slaves to righteousness,' (Rom.6:18) a slavery occurring rightly in that which Merton identifies as 'soul': the



place where human identity is formed; in the conscious, rational and willful centre of human existence.

Yet when we turn to consider interpretations about the one baptised by John, annointed by God with the Holy Spirit and power, who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed, because God was with him, (Acts 10:36-39) we confront often a sphinx-like figure, who although considered *totus homo*, is left devoid of the barest vestiges considered adequate to human spirituality? The previous citation of Tertullian, which begins Part II, perhaps hints at the problem, for to a greater degree than the tradition to develop after him, Tertullian understood more deeply the relevance of Christ's humanity as being identical to that possessed by those in need of salvation, and consequently, one whose spiritual formation developed in similar fashion to his fellow human beings. It is not insignificant that such an insight emerges from a Montanist background with its openness to appreciate the work and person of the Spirit.

The trouble, however, is that the pneumatic dimension to Christ's identity and spirituality is more or less missing from Chalcedon's most important formula which was to have such a profound influence upon subsequent christological interpretation. This is not to presume that the whole question of the Saviour's humanity and his spiritual growth was not a topic of discussion. This is not a mere querulous point to be raised and then summarily dismissed. Only the most uninformed commentator on Christian doctrine could suggest that the humanity of the Saviour was an undiscussed issue of patristic theology. In the cauldron of christological debate it was a focus of attention for the most important christological battles. And for good reasons: belief about he, who in faith, is proclaimed *verus Deus, verus homo* surely remains abstracted from *orthopraxis* unless the practical implications of such a statement of faith are 'unpacked'.

What, in retrospect, appears significantly lacking in the development of christological formulae is a parallel interest in the pneumatic nature of the one is proclaimed 'truly' God and 'truly' man. The 'how' and 'wherefore' of human development as portrayed, for instance, in the Lucan depiction of Jesus as the one who 'increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favour



with God and man,' came to be overlooked (Luke 2:52). If after all it is through the Spirit that human obedience which leads to righteousness is procured, what does it say about the adequacy of our christology if we occlude this pneumatic dimension from our understanding of the Saviour's humanity? We stand well short of meaningful communication and christological adequacy if, in affirming Jesus Christ as *verus Deus, verus homo*, we fail to address this pneumatic omission. Rather than adhere blindly to Christian truths expressed within the syntax of ecclesial formulae, the ongoing hermeneutical task of systematic theology should be to outline the dynamics which facilitate a pneumatic dimension to incarnational language. The depth and range of our discussion must include not only the 'master-image'<sup>2</sup> or 'master-truth'<sup>3</sup> expressed through incarnational syntax, but also those expressed in pneumatological and sanctificational syntax, ie, a making sense of the person and work of the Spirit in incarnation.

The task, then, of systematic theology is to expand our 'epistemic priority'<sup>4</sup> beyond the purely incarnational to incorporate the inspirational, as well as show the relation between the two. If the task of systematic theology, as Kaufman argues is the 'attempt to state as correctly and straightforwardly as possible a theological perspective,'<sup>5</sup> then the task facing us in Part III is to do just this in relation to the manner by which Irving establishes a christology of efficiency: one which facilitates both incarnational and inspirational theological perspectives. If on the other hand, the ultimate aim of systematic theology, as Lacugna argues, is not simply analytical but constructive, of going beyond the inadequacies to take up the 'challenge to advance new ways of thinking and speaking about God', then the task in Part III involves us in showing how Irving does just that in relation to his pneumatic understanding of incarnation. For if the Christian kerygma wishes not to eschew the traditional belief of incarnation, the *enfleshment* of Deity, then it must enter the 'logical space'<sup>6</sup> created by such an affirmation of faith, namely, to go beyond the act of enfleshment to both the grounds and means by which such an act both comes to be and is found to be efficacious to the human need of salvation. It is a logical space between what we may caricature as incarnational and inspirational, Alexandrian and Antiochene type



christologies, namely, the difference in christological method between the that which stresses respectively, the divine and human agency of incarnation.

How may we go about this? Herein are we brought to the central purpose of our thesis, for the intention in Part III is to outline how Irving adds content to the 'logical space' lying between an affirmation of incarnational and inspirational type christologies. It is the argument of this thesis that Irving best delineates the means by which this 'space' may be interpreted by means of his christology whose efficacy hinges on the place he attributes the Spirit in incarnation.

The upshot of this is the need to explore the means by which content may be developed within this 'logical space'. The method assumed in this thesis has been to outline what Irving identifies as the two poles within which incarnational and inspirational paradigms may exist: to establish the parameters of discussion, namely, the Being of God as Trinity and human being in its becoming. Such an assumption rests on two criteria: firstly, that these are the paradigms used by Irving in order to establish his thesis, and are outlined in Parts I and II. And secondly, that in the place Irving attributes the Spirit in both, there is facilitated a means of talking meaningfully of an efficient christology, for by means of his interpretation of both the divinity and humanity of Christ a way is opened up for us to talk about the pneumatological and sanctificational relation of the Spirit to the incarnate Son.

Our task is one requiring recognition of both the *particular* and the *progressive* in christological interpretation: *particular* in that the context within which questions are raised, problems confronted and solutions proffered creates its own 'perceptual shift',<sup>7</sup> (by changing the way in which we perceive the dynamics of incarnation); and *progressive* in that the ensuing perceptual shift itself creates a 'paradigm change'<sup>8</sup> by which subsequent interpretation may be developed.

Within and because of these different and developing traditions, the task of modern theology with its new context of questions, problems and



solutions is to make sense of both the Christian kerygma and its interpretations, whether they be purely theological or christological.

It is my contention in this thesis that Irving's christology may help us in such a task. In the same way that his doctrines of God and human being appear to draw from different traditions, so his christology appears to unite several disparately opposing facets. Irving achieves this by means of his paradigmatic perceptual shift which makes 'space' for the person and place of the Spirit in incarnation. Also, I wish to accede to the point Surin makes, in Part I, about our theological method:<sup>9</sup> that progress towards a modern understanding and interpretation of the person and work of Christ must rise above a method which sets one historical approach against another. We should not caricature the major christological traditions of Christendom, for example, those of Alexandria and Antioch, as if each were the antithesis of the other. If Surin's critique is correct, then in relation to incarnational and inspirational christologies we ought not to interpret them as opposing interpretations of the same data but understand them as solutions to different problems, as answers to different questions, and wait alongside that great cloud of witnesses which has moulded theological history in its endeavour to add light to the mystery of faith.

Therefore, it is hoped that between the two christological schools there is a third alternative: of moving into the creative space between both orthodox foci of Alexandria and Antioch, incarnational and inspirational, 'above' and 'below' or whatever category used to identify their content, and explore a possible *via medians* through them. It is, in short, to enter into the 'logical space' about which we have been talking.

It is this method which Irving, either consciously or unconsciously, has adopted. In order to explicate both the assurance of the Saviour's divinity and the believer's assurance of salvation, Irving enters this 'logical space' and develops his theology and anthropology in order to bring greater focus upon the person of Christ. In order to do so, he operates on three levels: the theological, the anthropological and the christological. Whilst it is wrong to suggest that each may be considered



independent of the others, the structure of the present thesis, of identifying Irving's doctrine of God as Trinity and his doctrine of human being separately, has been adopted in order to highlight the means by which Irving establishes his christology. In so doing, the argument of this thesis has been both foundational and progressive: foundational in that it is founded on Irving's understanding of the being of God and human being; progressive in that by this method we are then able to move toward the means by which he unites both in the Christian affirmation of incarnation.

Therefore, whilst Irving's entire thrust is christological after a particular fashion, the fulcrum by which his christology develops rests on an understanding of both the being of God and human being, for with them he arrives at both an ontological and functional interpretation of incarnation. It is between both foci that he constructs his christology in such a manner as to give content to the 'logical space' existing within the creative tension of what we may identify as incarnational and inspirational type christologies. Thus, whilst the person and work of Christ remain at the fore of Irving's theology, they do so only in so far as Irving maintains his underlying theology and anthropology.

However, if these are the building blocks of Irving's christology, the binding medium by which they are constructed is his soteriological concern. And quite rightly, for it is only in light of the human condition and its subsequent solution from within the community of sinners, that the Christian proclamation of Good News makes sense. 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those that are sick' for Christ 'came not to call the righteous, but sinners,' (Matt. 9:12-3). Now, this is hardly a novel insight to Christian doctrine: it stands at the very heart of the Christian faith, the basis of each and every *credo*. It is that which dictates the entire *ordo salutis*. The content of Parts I and II substantiates the foundation of Irving's doctrine of Christ, in order that the 'why' and 'wherefore' of his christology, and consequently his soteriology, may be better understood. This has been undertaken for two methodological reasons. Firstly, the attention and stress in previous Irving research has focused solely upon Irving's doctrine of Christ and the



brouhaha caused by his understanding of the humanity of Christ. Subsequently, there has been little, if any, detailed research into the intimately related doctrines of God and human being in Irving's thought.<sup>10</sup> Parts I and II have sought to delineate Irving's doctrines of God and human being as self-contained presentations gleaned from the data contained in his sermons and publications in order to present fully for the first time each doctrine as it stands on its own. From this survey Irving emerges as a theologian who both maintains the axioms he has inherited, yet, yet does not mouth them uncritically. While he may be renowned for his particular, and to those familiar with only the Irving caricature, his peculiar, doctrine of Christ, the previous discussion shows this christological particularity to be equally a characteristic of his doctrines of God and human being. His doctrine of God as Trinity reflects a fully personal understanding of the Divine being integrated with an essential, rather than appended, pneumatology. For Irving, there are no divine nor human relations outwith the presence of God as Spirit.

Consequently, Irving's doctrine of God as Trinity may be understood as a re-orientation of the data *already there*: a re-presentation of ὁρθή δόξα; a making sense of what was to become increasingly a doctrine viewed as a secondary, albeit important, expression of Christian belief.

Therefore the method undertaken in the previous chapters is one that is not altogether foreign to that employed by Irving. Although he did preach a series of sermons on the doctrine of God, neither in his sermons nor in his apologetic publications do we find an overall systematic presentation of his theology or anthropology. Rather, we confront the thinking of one who allows the issues at hand to interact with the tradition inherited, in order to arrive at a more adequate understanding of the Christ event. In so doing, Irving's theology underwent a distinct reorientation, but one, as has been outlined in our previous discussion, that is not so much a movement away from the tradition, as an attempt to develop the data and concepts already contained in that tradition. What is so interesting about Irving is not merely that he seeks a dogmatic re-examination by means of a thoroughly christocentric hermeneutic, nor that he uses, rather than rejects, traditional formulary language. Rather, in uniting the *historical*



figure of Jesus Christ with the Judeo-Christian God, Irving seeks to do so by means of an essentially *trinitarian* hermeneutic, and whilst doing so believes he is engaging in relevant theological discussion.

What interests us here for the argument of our thesis, is the manner by which Irving's understanding of salvation is expressed by means of an essentially trinitarian interpretation of the agency in incarnation. In and of itself such an understanding hardly suggests a paradigmatic change. However, when we add to this the place Irving attributes the Spirit, we are able to identify two significant factors. The first is how far it extends the tradition from which it emerges: a factor highlighted in Parts I and II. The second involves a study of comparison, in that whilst Irving appeared to be defending a dying and outlived theological paradigm, in expanding its pneumatic dimension he reveals its precocity in relation to how we may develop a modern christology.

However, in identifying his trinitarian understanding of incarnation the question is whether it is *economic*, (that the expression of Divine Being in a three-fold manner is solely in relation to the way in which Divine Being relates to the creature's need of salvation), or *essential* (that it is the very expression of Divine Being itself). In Part I Irving has been seen to argue vociferously for the latter. What is of interest here is that at the time he was formulating his own *essential* trinitarian christology, his immediate German contemporary, Friedrich Schleiermacher, was developing an *economic* interpretation of Divine Being in relation to incarnation. It is to this particular interpretation we now turn in order to assess whether this is a viable alternative to the task in hand: of establishing an efficient christology.

## 2. A Contemporary Solution.

### 2.1. Introduction.

Why should Irving's attempt to unite his christology with the doctrine of God as Trinity be considered an unusual method? The answer lies in the

fact that although the doctrine of the Trinity is part of the Christian story, as a result of the *Aufklärung* there was an increasing uneasiness regarding the primacy given to what was increasingly being viewed as a secondary expression of Christian faith. By Irving's time the paradigmatic shift brought about by the Enlightenment, with its Cartesian shift to a human centre of interpretation, coupled with Kantian rationalism and skepticism, led to a serious undermining of previously accepted interpretations of Christian doctrine.

Not surprisingly, therefore, did the doctrine of Christ undergo serious reconsideration, for the Enlightenment, according to McGrath, raised three major christological problems. Firstly, the 'two-natures' doctrine of the ancient and catholic Church was questioned as absurd and illogical. Secondly, it became more difficult to maintain the uniqueness of Jesus Christ without recourse to supernaturalism. Lastly, as the historical reliability of the Gospel records were more and more questioned, there was an increasing skepticism concerning knowledge of the historical Jesus.<sup>11</sup>

However, if the *philosophe* found difficulty in accepting the ancient distinction between the divine and the human in the figure of Jesus Christ, this was heightened by the growing difficulty in giving assent to the complexities inherent in the doctrine of God as Trinity. In a climate where 'person' was synonymous with 'individual', it was not surprising that the idea of three *persons* yet *one* God tottered close to the verge of incoherence. The language of Chalcedon had become the Babel of the Enlightenment. Consequently, in light of such a critical shift in thought, there arose the need to make new sense of both the God of Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ himself. The result was a critical rejection of traditional dogmatic paradigms. Therefore, the problem facing Irving and his seriously minded theological contemporaries was, according to Williams, that of explaining 'how the trans-mundane, transhistorical *monarchia* of God' could be 'united with the historical economy of redemption, and in particular, its self-disclosure in Incarnation.'<sup>12</sup>.

Williams here is discussing the problem facing Irving's greatest and most immediate contemporary, Friedrich Schleiermacher, to whose solution



attention is now turned, not in order to construct a straw man, but rather to illustrate the seriousness with which Schleiermacher took to safeguard the historical figure of Jesus Christ in his relation to being of God. In so doing, the perceptual change deliberated by Schleiermacher in his proposed solution may be highlighted in order to evaluate better the contribution Irving makes to this same problem.

## 2.2. Towards an Anthropological Solution.

Like Irving, the object of Schleiermacher's christological goal was the desire to establish the relevance of the historical Jesus Christ for the believer. This he sought to achieve phenomenologically by approaching the question and entire doctrine of God 'through a reflective analysis of religious consciousness and its object.'<sup>13</sup> It is here that Schleiermacher's doctrine of Christ becomes central: Jesus of Nazareth is the linchpin of the religious self-consciousness and consequently of all Christian doctrine, for according to TeSelle, Schleiermacher 'tried to give an account of the Christian consciousness as a specific feeling of dependence upon Jesus of Nazareth as the unique actualization of the ideal and denied the possibility of ever going beyond the direct dependence upon Jesus.'<sup>14</sup>

In order to understand the manner by which Schleiermacher answers the problem set by Williams above, we turn briefly to consider two major aspects of his thought. Firstly, what he means by a 'feeling of dependence' and secondly, the way in which Jesus Christ is the perfect actualisation of the ideal.

Schleiermacher identifies human being in terms of self-consciousness consisting of two elements: one expressing the existence of the subject for itself, and another its co-existence with an Other.'<sup>15</sup> This self-consciousness expresses itself both actively, in a *feeling of Freedom*, and passively, in a feeling of Dependence.'<sup>16</sup> The 'Whence' of this feeling of dependence is identified as 'God'.<sup>17</sup> 'God' however is not to be identified in any dogmatic manner, for the identity of God cannot be extrapolated from human religious self-consciousness. Rather the term merely 'presupposes an idea which is nothing more than the expression of the



feeling of absolute dependence.<sup>18</sup> Schleiermacher will allow only that God is given in this feeling of absolute dependence in some way. What is important about his feeling of absolute dependence is its relation to self-consciousness: human being is essentially relational. Human being is, to some degree, being-in-relation with an Other. Human being is intimately linked to the sense of the Other. To this extent there is a similarity of interpretation between Irving and Schleiermacher regarding the essence of human being: human being is that which depends on God for its *raison d'être*.

With this notion of self-consciousness as dependence upon the Other who is identified as 'God', the foundation is set for Schleiermacher's interpretation of the Christ event. In Jesus of Nazareth there is the historical actualisation of one whose God-consciousness is absolute. That which unites Jesus Christ with human being is the common human capacity to be fully dependent upon God, to be fully conscious of God, and in so doing, be fully self-conscious, fully personal. However, it should not be misunderstood that Schleiermacher correlates the being of God with that of humankind: rather, it is that as one becomes more fully dependent upon God, one becomes more human. What marks Jesus Christ from the rest of humanity is the fact that with him alone has the capacity been fully actualised: the feeling of complete dependence upon God, receives content and fulfillment only in the life of Jesus Christ. It is by the one who manifests through his life and historic influence upon the Church that in him there has been a complete actualisation that there is a full realisation of the being of God within humanity. Consequently, for Schleiermacher, the uniqueness of Jesus of Nazareth consists in him being the one in whom the capacity for human being to be fully dependent upon God is actualised. Since the being of God in a person and one's God-consciousness are one and the same thing<sup>19</sup> it means that in the full actualisation of Jesus Christ's self-consciousness as one fully dependent upon God, there is also the fullest expression of Divine Being. However, as we shall see later in Part III, although there is a parallel understanding between Irving and Schleiermacher concerning the place Jesus Christ holds as *Adām*, as the one in and through whom comes the new creation, there is a thoroughly unparallel manner in the way both



understand how this comes about. It is with Schleiermacher's understanding we concern ourselves here.

### 2.2.1. An Anthropological Solution.

We have yet to outline the dynamic which enables Schleiermacher to present Jesus Christ as Archetype. In doing so, Schleiermacher must avoid the *Aufklärung* criticism of introducing a supernatural means in order to establish the uniqueness of Christ. Firstly, he advocates that traditional christological expressions are to be critically re-assessed. His solution is to take leave of the two-nature doctrine in preference of his phenomenological approach. He attempts to overcome the problem of supernaturalism as well as the problems inherent in any traditional expression of the divine and the human in Jesus of Nazareth by subjecting such formulations to a phenomenological criterion. It is his belief that *'the ecclesiastical formulae concerning the Person of Christ need to be subjected to continual criticism'*<sup>20</sup> for the simple reason that dogmatic formulations have little relation to the Christian self-consciousness. So Schleiermacher rejects the traditional christological formulation for one he considers better, namely, that *'in Christ the creation of man first comes to completion.'*<sup>21</sup> Consequently, we begin to note a parting in the way between Schleiermacher and Irving, for whilst both hold to the central belief that Jesus Christ is the apex of human being, Schleiermacher does not believe, like Irving that the modern solution necessarily involves traditional dogmatic expression.

What, therefore, is Schleiermacher's solution? In order to establish the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, he turns to the figure of Adam. Like Irving, he both holds to a teleological interpretation of human being, and interprets human creation in light of the person and work of Christ. But unlike Irving, he approaches this from what appears to be an anthropocentric hermeneutic: the human religious self-consciousness. Schleiermacher uses this phenomenological christology with its feeling of absolute dependence on God in order to present Christ as the one who is totally dependent upon God at all points of his life. However, how does he



avoid the Achilles' heel according to Enlightenment criteria: by what means is Jesus Christ unique? Schleiermacher presents the dilemma well:

On the one hand one must conceive something in Christ that specifically distinguishes him from other men, and on the other hand holds fast to the view of really human conditions of life. One cannot say that these two tasks would really be carried out in mutual agreement in the course of the usual method of treatment..the truth of the matter is that those who hold fast to..dogma..fall into a docetism which holds that Christ in his true life is no true man, and all artificial aids that have been employed do not achieve what they were intended to achieve. On the other hand..those who take their departure from the attempt to represent the life of Christ completely as a genuinely human life usually end up by conceiving Christ in such a way that no intelligible reason remains from making him in any way such an object of faith, a central point of the world (or: of mankind), and this is the division that characterizes contemporary theology.<sup>23</sup>

Schleiermacher turns to his understanding of Adam, the first creation, in order to avoid this Enlightenment criticism and to steer himself between the above Scylla and Charybdis. Adam, the first creation, is an 'imperfect state of human nature,'<sup>24</sup> for in Adam the God-consciousness 'was inadequate and impotent, and only later broke forth in perfection in Christ.'<sup>25</sup> Whilst the human experience of sin and the need for redemption determines Schleiermacher's method he is equally insistent that the Redeemer must be exempt from the human condition of sin. In order to avoid the charge of resorting to a form of supernaturalism in order to substantiate the uniqueness and sinlessness of Christ, Schleiermacher posits a parallel between the persons of Adam and Christ, the first and second creations. If Schleiermacher's solution to the uniqueness of Christ is to say that in him we find one who, unlike the first Adam, is fully dependent upon God, one with a complete God-consciousness, how does he arrive at this without falling prey to the charge of supernaturalism?

Schleiermacher resolves this by insisting that Christ parallels Adam in that both are created from *divine* activity, rather than human. Three important points of similarity interest us here. Firstly, like Adam, the God-consciousness of Christ develops *within* time. Secondly, in an attempt to remove Christ from the human community of sin, Schleiermacher advocates



that Jesus Christ is created as *original* human being, a humanity not affected by sin. And thirdly, this is achieved by a new implanting of the God-consciousness at the beginning of Christ's life.<sup>26</sup> In Christ the 'existence of God' is possible of being creative. At this point Schleiermacher delineates the means by which the Redeemer does indeed stand outwith the community of sin, yet as one capable of redeeming, by presenting Christ as the Second Adam, the second creation.

This Second Adam is altogether like all those who are descended from the first, only that from the outset He has an absolutely potent God-consciousness.<sup>27</sup>

This is hardly a throw away line for any serious modern theologian to make, let alone tuck away innocuously in a much larger discourse of argument. Is this not a blatant leap in the supernatural? How does one come to have an *absolutely potent God-consciousness*? What is of most interest here is the fact that Schleiermacher divorces his solution from the Synoptic presentation of Jesus Christ as one in relationship with God through the Spirit. Rather, he posits a thoroughly *monopersonal* analysis as to how Jesus Christ is sinless. It is by presenting Jesus Christ as an archetype of a new order of creation that Schleiermacher attempts to clear this hurdle.

Firstly, he admits that the emergence of Christ is to some degree, a supernatural event, but one of the same kind as that of the first creation. If in the act of creating both Adam and Christ there is a divine agent, then for both their coming into existence constitutes a new act of creation. Secondly, however, whilst the creation of the first Adam consisted in the creation of human nature with an inadequate God-consciousness, the second Adam is created with the capacity to attain a full God-consciousness. The inadequacy of the first Adam is reflected in the human condition to sin. But the second Adam expresses his new humanity by virtue of his complete God-consciousness. This he achieves by means of an external influence, but one which is in continuity with the creation of the first Adam. Thus Schleiermacher argues:

Though its existence transcends the nature of the circle in which it appeared, there is no reason why we should not believe that the appearing of such a life is the result of the power of development which resides in our human nature.<sup>28</sup>



So, whilst the Second Adam emerges from out of the human community, he does so in a discontinuous manner: he does not emerge from within the human context of sin. If the first Adam possesses the latent possibility of absolute God-consciousness, then this development in Jesus Christ is not to be understood as a totally supernatural event. Rather, Jesus Christ is the one who exists at the highest level of human existence, whose God-consciousness is at all times fully developed in temporal relation to his human development. It is this idea of temporal activity between the God-consciousness and the human development that highlights the means by which Schleiermacher understands how it is possible for Jesus Christ to live a sinless life. In every state of human development, his feeling of absolute dependence, God-consciousness is the highest operating principle in his life. In this relation of self-consciousness and God-consciousness, Jesus Christ is seen to be the Archetype. Schleiermacher's proposal consists in uniting the humanity of Jesus Christ with the 'Other' who constitutes the 'Whence' of the feeling of absolute dependence. In so doing Jesus Christ is, therefore, the example of humanity at the height of its potential,<sup>29</sup> for in Christ the creation of human being first reaches completion. Christ achieves this by virtue of his God-consciousness which distinguishes him from all other human beings whilst at the same time reveals the undivided being of God in him. Thus, that which is latent and inadequately expressed in human being is actualised in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is true human being. But because Schleiermacher has established the grounds of human being to be a feeling of absolute dependence, it means that in the full and perfect expression the feeling of absolute dependence there is also the fullest expression of divine being.

If the self-activity of the new common life is original in the Redeemer and proceeds from his alone, then as a historical individual he must have been at the same time archetypal, that is, the archetype must have become completely historical in him, and each historical moment of this individual must have borne within it the archetypal.<sup>30</sup>

### 2.3. The Theological Dimension.

Up to this point, it is clear that Schleiermacher avoids discussing the doctrine of Christ in relation to the doctrine of God. Rather, he seeks to develop a Christology in relation to the human feeling of absolute dependence upon God.



The task in hand is to address the relationship Schleiermacher posits between the absolute God and the historical Jesus Christ. This he approaches phenomenologically. Firstly, the human religious self-consciousness is taken as the standard for theological construction. In its sense of sin and need of redemption, it is aware of its feeling of dependence upon the Other. Secondly, Jesus Christ is identified as the one in whom the sense of absolute dependence is actualised. This teleological interpretation will be discussed below, but at this point it is necessary to turn to Schleiermacher's doctrine of God.

As has been noted, Schleiermacher was critical of traditional formulations on the basis that they could not be inferred from the religious self-consciousness. Thus was he not only critical of the two nature doctrine as a christological paradigm, but he was even more critical of the traditional doctrine of God as Trinity as a means of identifying the person of Christ. We can identify three major reasons for doing so.

Firstly, the doctrine of the Trinity is not a direct expression of the Christian self-consciousness. Consequently, concerning the doctrine of the Trinity, he argues that the dogmatic formation of the doctrine is *not an immediate utterance concerning the Christian self-consciousness, but only a combination of several such utterances.*<sup>31</sup> In saying this Schleiermacher is not to be understood as rejecting the validity of the doctrine of the Trinity: although it is given a central place in his theological construction, it is not one derived as an immediate consequence of the Christian self-consciousness.

We rightly regard the doctrine of the Trinity, in so far as it is a deposit of these elements, as the coping-stone of Christian doctrine.<sup>32</sup>

Nevertheless, Schleiermacher remains firm in his resolve: that which we meet in Jesus Christ, and comes to us as a result of Jesus Christ does not lead immediately to a recognition of an eternal distinction in the being of God.<sup>33</sup> The doctrine of the Trinity is to be divorced from what he considers to be the essential doctrines of the Christian faith.

It is important to make the point that the main pivots of ecclesiastical doctrine - the being of God in Christ and in the Christian Church - are independent of the doctrine of the Trinity.<sup>34</sup>



Secondly, Schleiermacher detects internal difficulties with regards the concepts of trinitarian formulation. These, he argues lead to a confusion regarding the relationship between the Divine Essence and the three persons of the Trinity: either all causality belongs to the one Essence, or all causality belongs to the three persons.<sup>35</sup>

Thirdly, due to the external political considerations which influenced ecclesiastical formulations, Schleiermacher argues that 'a multitude of definitions' were developed which had 'absolutely no relation to the immediate Christian self-consciousness.'<sup>36</sup>

What, therefore, does Schleiermacher make of the doctrine of God as Trinity if he does not fully reject it? Firstly he questions the way in which the doctrine has been developed:

*We have the less reason to regard this doctrine as finally settled since it did not receive any fresh treatment when the Evangelical (Protestant) Church was set up; and so there must still be in store for it a transformation which will go back to its very beginnings.<sup>37</sup>*

Secondly, he questions the content of the doctrine as it now stands. In this he anticipates LaCugna's earlier comment: there needs to be a 'thorough-going criticism of the doctrine in its older form' in order that the way may be prepared for a 'reconstruction of it corresponding to the present condition of other related doctrines.'<sup>38</sup> The task facing Schleiermacher is to introduce his own understanding of the trinitarian identity of the God of Jesus Christ.

However, it is in his sequel to the *Glaubenslehre* that Schleiermacher picks up the threads of his doctrine of the Trinity, and to a Sabellian interpretation of the Trinity that he turns.<sup>39</sup> Having delineated his theological criteria, and in so doing, judged the traditional presentation of the being of God as inadequate, he returns to those trinitarian distinctions posited by Sabellius who considered that the 'Trinity was not essential to Godhead as in itself considered, but only in reference to created beings and on their account.'<sup>40</sup> Consequently, the Son did not exist before the Incarnation; the Spirit did not exist before the creation of human being, and before creation there was no Father, only pure divine unity. It is only in relation, therefore, to the created order that the



Godhead is identified as Trinity. According to him, '*the whole Trinity is God revealed; but the divine Being as he is in and of himself and in his simple unity, is God concealed or unrevealed*'.<sup>41</sup>

To the Father in his relation to the created order Sabellius attributed the function of governing the world; to the Son that of redeeming it; to the Spirit the task of sanctifying and operating on the community of believers.<sup>42</sup> The 'Spirit' is not a 'Person' but the 'vital unity of the Christian fellowship as moral personality; and this, since everything strictly excluded, we might denote by the phrase, its *common spirit*.'<sup>43</sup>

What, therefore, are the dynamics of this moral personality or common spirit according to Schleiermacher? Firstly, this common spirit comes to us through Christ.

If we begin with Christ and hold to the proposition that the union of the Divine with His human personality was at the same time an enrichment of human nature as a whole, it follows not only in general that even after His departure this union must continue, but also (since this continuation is to proceed from the union itself) that wherever it exists there must be a bond with Christ, and *vice versa*. And since after the departure of Christ the enlarged range of connexion with Him can only proceed from the fellowship of believers, these three facts - being drawn by that union into the fellowship of believers, having a share in the Holy Spirit, and being drawn into living fellowship with Christ - must simply mean one and the same thing.<sup>44</sup>

Secondly, Schleiermacher compares the dynamics of the common 'Spirit' of the Church to that of a state or nation. The Spirit is the one through whom the Church has become unified 'in the same way that a nation is one through the national character common to and identical in all.'<sup>45</sup>

Lastly, it is a receiving of the Spirit which is greater than that possessed by Christ, for it is the community of a greater number of believers than that experienced by which Christ.<sup>46</sup> Herein is the gulf between Schleiermacher and Irving at its greatest: for Schleiermacher, the Spirit is *not* the Spirit that come to us *through* Christ. Rather, it is the communal 'spirit' of a collective group established *because of* Christ.



#### 2.4. The Efficiency of Schleiermacher's Christology.

It will be clear from the previous discussions of Parts I and II that Irving differs from Schleiermacher in major areas. What unites both scholars is not simply the fact that they are contemporaries, but more importantly their mutual desire to make sense of the historical Jesus, and to establish an essential link between the him and his Church.

It has been thought appropriate to consider Schleiermacher's christology in order to highlight the perceptual or paradigmatic changes he profers as solutions to christological problems. Firstly, what is his solution to the relation between the historical Jesus and the Divine Being? And secondly, what is the relationship of the historical Jesus with the Church?

Schleiermacher answers the first by means of a two-fold re-definition of the doctrines of human being and God, as outlined above. Since the religious consciousness does not tell us anything about the Divine being in itself, we may talk of the Christ event as the revelation of the Divine Being as Trinity only so far as it involves creation. And it is considered in a trinitarian manner simply because this is the manner by which the Christian revelation expresses itself.<sup>47</sup> The doctrine of God as Trinity is the means by which the Divine Being operates in its relation to the created realm: not as that which is essential to the very being of God. As far as the unity of God is concerned, Schleiermacher is content to assign that to the realm of the unrevealed. Consequently, he sees little relevance for the Spirit in incarnation.

However it is with Schleiermacher's relation between the person of Christ and the Christian Church that concerns us at this point. It would be a misrepresentation to say that he does not unite the two. By virtue of the synonymy on the one hand between the being of God in Christ and his perfect God-consciousness, and on the other the being of God in the Church he does indeed present a union between the two. However, it is a union that does not come *through* Christ but as a *result* of Christ.

In the Christian Church, as individual influences no longer proceed directly from Christ, something divine must exist. This something we call accordingly the Being of God in it, and it is this which continues within the Church the communication of the



perfection and blessedness of Christ.<sup>48</sup>

At first inspection, Schleiermacher's christology appears to resemble a well argued integration of the two ancient christologies of Alexandria and Antioch. On the one hand, he identifies and stresses both the human and divine dimensions of the Christ event. His is a clear attempt to safeguard both dimensions. On the other hand, he gives a sense of priority to the divine in Christ: it is this which actualises the human latent potential. To this extent, Schleiermacher's is an Alexandrian type christology despite the apparent stress on the fully actualised humanity of Jesus Christ.

This Alexandrianism is perhaps most evident in Schleiermacher's pneumatology for the Schleiermacherian Christ has little need of the Spirit. He arrives at this point on at least three grounds. Firstly, despite the fact that he seeks to criticize and replace older, traditional formulae, Schleiermacher fails to address a presupposition that is at the heart of most non-pneumatic christologies: the sanctificational dimension of incarnation. Schleiermacher presumes that the meeting of the divine with the human demands at that same time a banishing of all that marks the human context that demands salvation. Consequently, concerning the sinlessness of Christ he asserts:

Whatever is involved in the ideality of the contents of His personal spiritual life must also be compatible with this purely human conception of His historical existence. Thus, in the first place, His development must be thought of as wholly free from everything which we have to conceive as conflict...At every moment even of His period of development He must have been free from everything by which the rise of sin in the individual is conditioned.<sup>49</sup>

Secondly, he attributes sinlessness to Jesus Christ on the basis of his unique creation: a creation from outwith the sinful community, a humanity as it was originally created. It is the product of the Divine Being with Jesus Christ in the temporal relationship of the being of God in him at every stage of human growth unimpeded by the vicissitudes of sin. Thus, and thirdly, Christ's sinlessness is not derived from any anointing of or empowering by the Spirit. As such, Schleiermacher's christology results in

pneumatological redundancy during the ministry of Jesus Christ. His Sabellian leanings preclude any essential and dynamic pneumatic dimension to his christology.

In light of our desire to establish a christology of efficiency, there are two major aspects of his theology that interest us. Firstly, there is the relation of Divine being to the figure of Christ. Does his Sabellian interpretation of the doctrine of God avoid Baur's criticism that there is no link between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith? Surely there is in that Jesus Christ is the one who introduces the new, second creation, and whose influence is carried into the Church by the Spirit. However, is this an *sufficient* interpretation of the person and work of the Spirit, let alone of Christ?

It is our contention that Schleiermacher's interpretation of the Divine in relation to the human in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is *insufficient* in that it rests upon an inadequate presupposition regarding the dynamics of Divine Being.

However, secondly, this *theological* inadequacy rests upon a prior *soteriological* inadequacy regarding the human context of incarnation. In that Schleiermacher resorts finally to a Sabellian interpretation of Divine Being in its relation to the economy of salvation, he follows merely the logic involved in a particular interpretation of the *humanum* of incarnation. If the pneumatological and sanctificational dimensions inherent to the Synoptic presentation of Jesus Christ are ignored, both the work of the Spirit in incarnation and the relation of the Divine in Christ to the Spirit are annulled. In pursuing a monopersonal interpretation of incarnation, Schleiermacher divorces the Spirit from the arena of incarnation. In so doing, he forges a double divorce within the dynamics of salvation: a divorce both between the person of Christ and the Spirit, (both in terms of the Son's relation to the Father and the incarnate Son's life of faith), and the person of Christ and the believer's present experience.



Consequently, if Jesus Christ is the bearer of perfect humanity, undisturbed by sin, if the Divine Being brings about his sinlessness, then, to what degree do we confront one like us, one *tempted* like us in all respects yet without sin? Schleiermacher highlights and maintains a fundamental weakness of the very tradition he seeks to criticise, namely, the source of sanctification as derived by virtue of the divine presence, rather than in the dynamics of Jesus Christ's active relationship with the Spirit of God. In so doing, he undermines both his doctrine of God, who essentially is relegated completely to the realm of the unknown, and his doctrine of Christ, whose humanity is made so completely *other* that he has little to say to the mass of humanity as it struggles with the very depths to which it is capable of plunging, and in light of which any christological theodicy must be found sufficient.

The question, however, still remains to be answered: What may we identify as an *efficient* christology? If Schleiermacher's theological interpretation is deemed inadequate, his christology inefficient in effecting its goal, what then is a more adequate alternative? The intention in highlighting Schleiermacher's christology here has not been to parody or belittle his influence and input to modern theology. One would be grossly insensitive both to Schleiermacher's theological acumen and his Christian devotion to accuse him of belittling that which he inherited from within the believing community.<sup>50</sup> His is a genuine attempt to make meaningful the person of Christ to his time. If he is at fault, it is in rejecting one set of presuppositions, namely, those inherent to any Chalcedonian christology, for ones more in tune with his own *Zeitgeist*. In so doing, as one married to the spirit of a particular age, he was, in his theological construction, to find himself quickly a widower. To the post-Holocaust child, born of another age, involved with another *Zeitgeist*, who has it so much nearer home to be scared by the 'desert places' of twentieth century mindlessness and mediocrity, the Schleiermacherian Christ fails as an efficient christological expression.

Why is this so? It is our contention that it does so for two major reasons, both of which stem from his *economic* interpretation of the being and character of God as Trinity, and in particular, from his interpretation



of the place, or lack of place, he attributes the Spirit in incarnation. We have seen, firstly, that Schleiermacher makes as a *priori* the premise that the trinitarian being of God belongs solely to its relation to the created order. Consequently, the knowledge we derive of the Divine identity from incarnation is an indirect knowledge for God is utterly transcendent. Whilst Irving and Schleiermacher both agree that God is beyond human comprehension, the former refuses to cleave apart Divine action from Divine being in the manner assumed by the latter. In so doing Schleiermacher incorporates a fundamental *theological* weakness to his christology: in rejecting the intention of traditional formulae, he confuses a *natural* incapacity of human being with an *essential* distinction of divine being. It is our contention that Irving furnishes us with a more adequate progression of thought, for although God is indeed completely other and unknown because he is greater than human comprehension, in his action in creation and salvation, there is a revelation of his being in finite form which is revealed to be *trinitarian*.

In turn, we are able to address the second criticism of Schleiermacher. By divorcing the being of God as Son from that of Spirit, by reducing divine agency to modalistic terms, Schleiermacher introduces a fundamental *soteriological* weakness to his christology. We can identify this in two ways: firstly, in identifying the Spirit as the common spirit of the church in similar terms to that of a national spirit, Schleiermacher dangerously anthropomorphises the Spirit. In so doing, he denudes the Spirit of any essentially personal identity and adds to the gulf he creates between the being of God and human being.

Secondly, when Schleiermacher couples his Sabellian interpretation of the being of God with his hamartiological insistence that Christ is free from all taint and struggle of sin, he is consistent in going on to remove any meaningful pneumatic dimension to his christology. However, in so doing, he undermines the significance of Christ in relation to the believer in his or her struggles of life, and makes the significance of Christ totally teleological, in that Christ becomes the standard towards which human being strives, without incorporating the equally important stress that he



has become this standard from out of the midst of common humanity, sharing to a degree the plight of our common ancestry.

It is noteworthy that whilst Schleiermacher interpreted the trinitarian being of God in purely economic terms, Irving sought to give meaning to the person and work of Christ in essentially trinitarian terms. Both men sought to bring fresh meaning to the significance of Jesus Christ by means of the paradigmatic change brought about by their shift in interpretation. It is our contention that the perception of incarnation assumed by Irving in which he gave place to the person and work of the Spirit in incarnation and to the being of God himself, facilitated a paradigmatic shift which radicalised his perception of the action of God in Christ in incarnation. Through expanding the place of the Spirit in incarnation Irving was able to make sense of traditional trinitarian language in its relation to incarnation. By means of his essentially trinitarian interpretation of incarnation, and one in which there is given greater meaning to the personal work of the Spirit, Irving is able to identify the place of the Son both *qua* God and *qua* human in a manner that facilitates meaningful assurance of salvation to the believer.

### 3. TOWARDS A CHRISTOLOGY OF EFFICIENCY.

#### 3.1. Introduction.

Within the bounded context of theological possibilities, Edward Irving's christology offers a striking alternative to that offered by Schleiermacher. It is, for Irving, an attempt to establish a christology that may be deemed efficient to the task at hand: a task that involved a 'perceptual' change in his christological paradigm, in order to re-assess the Spirit's relation to Christ in incarnation.

Irving's christological motivation operates on two levels: firstly, that which has been identified in Part I in terms of revelation, as the purely theological element of incarnation which Irving identifies as concerned primarily with the grace of God as the means of expressing the glory of

God. The soteriological thrust to Irving's theology, consequently is central, for it is in the manifestation of God's grace, namely his saving action in incarnation, that his glory is revealed. It is a concern that moulds his entire thinking: the incarnation is not only the expression of God's justice, but of God's grace and in so doing, of his glory.<sup>51</sup> It is also a theological method from which is expunged any element of necessity for Irving precludes any notion of necessity from the act of incarnation:

The incarnation of the Eternal Word hath for its only beginning and origin the purpose of God to make known unto angels, and principalities, and men, the grace, and mercy, and love which there is in His own eternal essence. <sup>52</sup>

According to Irving, the sole purpose of incarnation is 'to make known...the grace and mercy, the forgiveness and love, which (God) beareth towards those who love the honour of His Son.'<sup>53</sup> As Part I has discussed, the incarnation is the means by which the very being of God is revealed, and it becomes so through the agency of salvation.<sup>54</sup> The one who reveals God is the one who saves: 'soteriology cannot be divorced from Christology'.<sup>55</sup> It is in incarnation that, 'for once, mercy and truth did meet together, for once, righteousness and peace did kiss each other'.<sup>56</sup> It comes as no surprise, therefore, that Irving's christology is determined by a strong soteriological concern, for the proper approach to Irving's christology, like that of the New Testament, is through his soteriology. As Mozley rightly states, 'the fundamental distinction between Christ and men is that between the Saviour and the saved'.<sup>57</sup> However, what constitutes such a paradigmatic shift in perception is the manner by which Irving uses the person and work of the Spirit to unite his christology and soteriology.

What is of import here is the manner by which Irving understands how grace can be given, the fallen be forgiven, the curse removed, sin stemmed, and the Divine wrath abated without any change in the 'Holy Will' of God.<sup>58</sup> And in particular whether the manner by which this occurs is one which facilitates an efficient christology, namely, one which offers not only real hope of salvation, but which actualises such a hope, for this, the second motivation of Irving's christology, is the soteriological thrust that determines his entire understanding of Christ. In stating his reasons for pursuing this line of inquiry, he states that:



When..I perceived that..the church was coming into peril of believing that Christ had no temptation in the flesh to contend with and overcome, I felt it my duty to inter-calate in the volume on the Incarnation, a Sermon. (No III.) shewing out the truth in a more exact and argumentative form, directed specially against the error that our Lord took human nature in its creation, and not in its fallen, estate. And another, (No IV) shewing the most grave and weighty conclusions flowing from the true doctrine, that he came in order to redeem us from the same.<sup>59</sup>

It does not serve the purpose of our argument to outline the orthodoxy of Irving's argument here: such a task has already been undertaken and accomplished with clarity and precision by Dorries who establishes the orthodoxy of Irving's understanding of the humanity of the Saviour.<sup>60</sup> Rather, it is, as it were, our task to take up from where Dorries ends: to establish whether such a christology is efficient or not. Does it accomplish that which it sets out to achieve? Does it have an inner coherence? To answer these questions, we must focus our attention on Irving's doctrine of Christ, in order to determine whether Irving has established a Christology of efficiency.

It is at this point that we may begin to assess the efficiency of Irving's overall soteriology, namely, his understanding of the dynamics of incarnation, for it is by means of the specific understanding of incarnation that Irving unites the agent of incarnation, the Triune God, with the object of salvation, human being. Implicit to his soteriology is the intimate relation he believes to exist between incarnation and atonement. It will come as no surprise that it is here, within the 'logical space' opened up between the two, that Irving expands his understanding of incarnation in order to give space to the person and work of the Spirit. In so doing he expands his understanding of the relation between incarnation and atonement.

The question of the atonement...doth not so much grow out of, as it is involved in, and throughout implicated with, being of the very essence of, the incarnation; not as circumstance of its manifestation, but an original and substantial element in the idea itself.<sup>61</sup>



If there is any one fundamental theme to Irving's argument, it is that the idea of atonement becomes effective only in and through incarnation. Therefore is it in the deep mystery of atonement that Irving asks his most profound questions, for his is not the character to be content with mere mouthing of doctrine. Rather is he driven to explain the how and wherefore of his *credo*. To one who believes in the holiness of God and in a humanity that is expunged from this holiness by virtue of its disobedience, the deepest mystery lies in the act of reconciliation; how is the unholy creature to be reconciled to the holiness of God without compromising that very holiness? For lying at the very heart of his understanding of the incarnation is the intention of Godhead in effecting reconciliation, of bringing about holiness in the human creature. But how does this reconciliation occur? The answer he gives is, by and large, determined by the context within which he argued, a context in which a *theologia crucis* was unquestioned, for this was not a point of discussion. Like Pokorný, Irving understands that, 'without Easter Jesus' life would be a shipwreck that would reveal only the negative side of things - the limits of human possibility', that, 'Jesus would be of so little importance that one could not take him seriously either as a question or as a model of shipwreck.'<sup>62</sup>

As we shall see, the context of debate lay not in the act of reconciliation, but in the dynamics necessary to deem it efficient in achieving its goal, for Irving is interested more in the positive side of things educes from the incarnation. Consequently, we find little stress on the place of the cross in Irving's theology. This is not to say that it is unimportant: rather the contrary - what one assumes is never explicitly stated. More importantly, it is not simply that Irving's intention demands a shift in focus away from a direct *theologia crucis*. This would be to miss the entire thrust of not only his but of New Testament theology, for there can be no separation of crucifixion from incarnation. We cannot interpret the statement, 'For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin' (2 Cor. 5:21) to refer solely to the crucifixion. Much more is it to be interpreted within the rubric of 'sin' which embraces not only the notion of sacrifice on the cross, but of the complete incarnate, filial obedience of Christ.



Lying at the heart of Irving's christology is the notion of sacrifice, for as we have noted in Part II where Irving establishes a foundation upon which to build a meaningful understanding of salvation, the Son is the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world. But whilst Irving identifies this in terms of the Son's eternal obedience to the will of the Father, it is also clear that such obedience only has theological meaning in light of the Son's sacrificial giving of himself on the cross, for the sufferings of Christ come not merely by imputation, but by very participation in that which is in need of reconciliation. This notion of participation becomes the driving force behind Irving's christology: the how and wherefore of participation that facilitates reconciliation between the holy God and the unholy creature. However, without a recognition that undergirding Irving's entire Christology is a *theologia crucis* Irving's stress on the reconciling work of Christ would be vacuous of any real meaning.<sup>63</sup>

This goodwill of God to our race, this pity of God, this desire on his part, to see us righted, is the very basis of the work of redemption; which has no origin except in the love of God to man and man's world lost. If God hated man and man's world for their sin, and pitied them not, what did redemption spring from? A good cannot spring from hatred, but is the form of love. Redemption is the greatest good, and therefore is the form of the greatest love. But redemption contemplates not a world in freedom of holiness, but a world in bondage to sin; and therefore there is no cause nor origin for redemption, save in the goodwill of God to a sinful race and a sinful world. Of this pre-existent love, of this unchangeable love, which there is in God's heart to His creatures, of this His special delight in man, and the habitual parts of the strong angelic herald is to my mind the strong demonstration; while, at the same time, it is the demonstration of the total inability of every creature but the Lamb which was slain, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, to do this mighty work.<sup>64</sup>

What is so significant about Irving's christology is the fact that he deems the orthodoxy of such a statement insufficient in itself to establish the efficiency of his christology. Rather, he perceives the necessity of involving the person of the Spirit. This comes as no surprise: this paradigm development runs throughout the argument of Parts I and II, wherein the specific relation of the Spirit with the Son who through his obedience to the Father in incarnation reveals the



very being of Godhead and brings about a new state of human existence. But what is, perhaps, most interesting about Irving is his stress in identifying the centrality of the Spirit for any adequate christology. Irving anticipates both the assertion characterised by Bromily, that there can be no pneumatology apart from christology,<sup>65</sup> and that of Moltmann who succinctly asserts that, 'Christology must presuppose a pneumatology if it intends to do justice to the history of Jesus as witnessed to by the synoptic writers and if it is to preserve the historical tradition of primitive Christian christology.'<sup>66</sup> For Irving there is nothing new either in Moltmann's assertion that christology must begin biblically with a 'pneumatological christology' and end with a 'christological pneumatology'. However, Irving's method, which embraces both the christological and the pneumatological, and maintains them in this order<sup>67</sup> may be best summarised in McDonagh's words:

The close association of the Holy Spirit with the person and achievement of Jesus Christ in his life, death and resurrection is the immediate foundation of all Christian understanding of the Spirit...Holy Spirit as Spirit of God is also Spirit of Christ, even Spirit of Jesus for the New Testament believers. The...spiritual and intellectual struggles which issued in the great conciliar definitions from Nicea to Chalcedon and beyond turned on the being, personal character, and salvific role of the Spirit. The historical eclipse of the Spirit in the theology and praxis of the Church may have been due to the exaggerations of a Christomonism as the historical emphasis on the Spirit may have seemed at times to obscure the specific nature and uniqueness of Jesus' achievement. Yet our whole Christian tradition insists on the indissoluble bond in divine origin and historical human activity between Jesus and the Spirit. Any understanding then of the relationship between the Holy Spirit and human identity must take account of the relationship between the Holy Spirit and Jesus' own identity as understood by the first disciples and the subsequent tradition.<sup>68</sup>

What is so significant about McDonagh's extended quotation is the manner in which it serves as a prolegomenon to Irving's christology, for it highlights the important relation the Church has held in faith to exist between the persons of Christ and the Spirit. If Irving's theological method of identifying the significance of the incarnation from a soteriological perspective is valid, then the efficiency of the resultant christology must be assessed in light of the intended goal: that which



requires redemption, namely human being. Furthermore, if Cullmann's succinct statement is correct, that 'all Christology is founded upon the life of Jesus,'<sup>69</sup> then we immediately confront perplexing questions about the manhood of Jesus, for, as Moule points out, it is 'a subject in which... drawbacks may be particularly great, in view of the wide range of the answers that have been thrown upon by the continual debate over this question.'<sup>70</sup>

The overall concern of our thesis is the answer Irving gives to this problem in his understanding of the incarnation. This leads us to the present task of identifying Irving's belief concerning the manhood of Jesus Christ. Due to the fact that this particular understanding lay at the very heart of the calumny surrounding Irving's own deposition from the pulpit and subsequent false accusations and misunderstandings it may appear repititious to give space to an area of his thought already given over to research.<sup>71</sup> The criticism, however, is not a valid one, for in order to establish the argument of this thesis, that Irving's understanding of the incarnation facilitates an efficient christology, ie, one that is capable of the assurance of salvation, it is necessary to outline what he understood to be *locus operans* of redemption, the humanity of Christ. In light of the underlying theme of our thesis, that such a christology is only sufficient in relation to the priority it gives to the Spirit both in terms of agent and object of salvation, Moule's suggestion, that 'the roots of that subtle relation between the individual and the corporate' have a pneumatic foundation, lying somewhere in the relation between Jesus and the Spirit,<sup>72</sup> is doubly valid. Irving's contribution is underrated, for in terms of Irving research, apart from isolated articles,<sup>73</sup> there has been little discussion regarding the pneumatic-trinitarian foundation of Irving's theology in its relation to the efficiency of his christology.

### 3.2. The Place of Incarnation: That Which is Assumed.

One of the major concerns which moulded Irving's theological development was the desire to overcome, what Batson identifies as 'the divorce between category and experience,'<sup>74</sup> of being able not only to communicate the message of salvation, but to sustain its assurance. Therefore of primary



concern to Irving was the desire to communicate to those under his pastoral care the assurance of salvation. It is this soteriological concern which drove him to focus on the 'crucial importance of (the) aspect of creatureliness...assumed by the Logos.'<sup>75</sup> Unfortunately, importance is not the partner to priority, and the question of the creatureliness of Christ has never had an easy passage throughout the history of Christian thought. It is to this creaturely dimension of incarnation, however, that attention is now turned.

In a perceptive article assessing the Pauline concept of *σάρξ*, Brannick identifies two criteria which succinctly summarise what Irving identifies as the *place of redemption*<sup>76</sup>: namely, *solidarity* and *power*.<sup>77</sup> These are apt criteria to adopt in delineating Irving's christology, for at its very centre is a concern to identify the very sphere in which redemption is fought and won. In his solidarity with the human race, Christ identifies completely with humanity in its being that which it should not. It is a humanity in solidarity with that requiring salvation: a situation or dimension which is more 'cosmic' than ethical; a bondage, or 'power sphere' in which people exist and from which they require release: a realm of 'solidarity with the human race' which Ware insists requires 'not merely an exterior, juridical imputation of our guilt to Christ, but something far deeper and more costly: an inner, organic sharing...in all our brokenness.'<sup>78</sup>

For Irving the efficacy of any given christology is the degree to which Christ shares in our brokenness and yet is able to initiate freedom from this power sphere. Consequently, implicit in his understanding of the dynamics of incarnation is the notion that the Divine Son is incarnated into this sphere. It is a concern with what Gunton calls, 'the *ontology of matter*.'<sup>79</sup> Therefore, Irving's christology centres around the humanity of Jesus Christ as the Saviour of human kind, for like Meyendorff, he correctly understands that 'the true dimension of the humanity of Jesus can be understood only in the context of soteriology.'<sup>80</sup> About this, the history of Christian thought is to greater or lesser degree agreed: it is a concern that carries the entire history of christological development. Where there has been less concord is in the context within and means by which this development has been delineated, namely, the creatureliness of



incarnation, for inherent in Judeo-Christian anthropologies is the belief that human being has become that which it was not and requires divine aid in becoming what it should be.<sup>81</sup> The question, therefore, is whether incarnation occurs in the former or latter state of human being.

### 3.2.1. The Humanity of Christ as Fallen Human Nature.

What, therefore, is the *place* of incarnation, and subsequently, of redemption? For Irving, it is intimately bound up with the manner in which we identify the humanity of the Saviour. Sykes identifies four possible interpretations to the 'bald statement that the divine word took our flesh.' Firstly, that at the moment of assumption, it was 'instantly transformed to be...a new type of humanity'. Secondly, that it was a flesh 'weakened by sin but not 'naturally' tainted by it'. Thirdly, that it was 'sinful flesh, *natura vitiosa*,' and fourthly, that it was 'humanity as it was before the fall'.<sup>82</sup>

Irving is quite adamant that in order to establish an adequate christology, one that initiates meaningful salvation, it can only be one type of humanity and not any other. Thus he considers as a 'rather novel position' that which Sykes has identified in the last of his categories, one which believes that Christ,

assumed human nature as it was found in Adam before he fell, as it was created by God ere ever sin was heard of,- that he was tempted no otherwise than Adam was tempted,- that sin is but an accident of, and not essential to, our nature,- that Christ's body was not mortal nor corruptible, - that he did not live by faith, - that his holiness was inherent in his human nature,- in a word, that he was Adam over again, with the Son of God as the person informing and sustaining the Adamic nature.<sup>83</sup>

Although Irving argues, on soteriological grounds, that this tends to doceticism and is therefore incapable of offering real salvation, his is primarily a theological argument. Such a view of the agency in incarnation results only in a binitarian form of agency, involving only two persons of the Godhead, the Father and the Spirit, who would work upon the human nature which would then be assumed by the Son.

In addition, Irving rejects the humanity Sykes identifies in the first of his categories, that,

his substance was the Virgin's, but that the Holy Ghost, in the generation, changed it into a new substance, by purging out all the impurities of the fallen flesh, and fixing it in a new state, wherein it should be liable to all our sinless infirmities, such as hunger, pain, and capability of dying.<sup>84</sup>

Fundamental to Irving's entire argument is his understanding of the humanity of Christ, which is, as it were, the master-key to his entire theology, for in a theology of revelation, the category of 'place' or 'sphere' in which redemption occurs, engages the most mysterious elements of theology. Is the One we identify as Creator and Saviour able to condescend not only to the realm of the finite and created, but to that which has gone array and abandoned its destiny? Such an inquiry touches at the very heart of the character of God: can his Love transcend its holiness and transform not *ex nihilo* but *ex perditione*, *ex corruptione*? Such categories as dismissed by Irving above serve only to obfuscate the dynamics of salvation, for the agency of salvation is placed in that which human being was intended to become, rather than in that which it has become.

What has been overlooked in the furor of debate and subsequent caricature of Irving is the intimate association Irving makes between the location, agent and means of salvation. For him, the *locus operans of redemption* provides a 'logical space' within which to develop a pneumatic dimension of incarnation. It is here that Irving finds a fertile and relatively undeveloped ground in which to cultivate his own appreciation of the person and work of the Spirit in his relation both to incarnation and soteriology. His entire christology is built upon the belief that 'the work to be accomplished must always be the measure of the power necessary to accomplish it'.<sup>85</sup> What lies at the heart of Irving's concern here is to establish a christology in which the person and work of the Spirit are central. If the work of Christ in redemption is perceived in terms of 'the bearing of so much inflicted wrath, vengeance, and punishment' then, Irving argues, there will be little concern for the work of the Spirit: it will be assumed that the divine nature itself is sufficient to bear 'the mighty



load' and 'sustain the Sufferer'. There is little need for 'a third principle, and that a person, and a divine person also. Accordingly, the Holy Spirit in the work of Christ is almost or altogether avoided; which, however, is declared to have been the power in which He performed His mighty works, and offered His blameless sacrifice.'<sup>86</sup>

Rather, the crux of the matter involves locating the context of salvation in a common category between the one in need of salvation and the One who brings about salvation. Furthermore, in this location is also to be found the intention of redemption. Thus, at the very heart of Irving's treatise on the incarnation is the union of both the location and intention of salvation. It is 'manhood fallen, which He took up into His Divine person, in order to prove the grace and the might of Godhead in redeeming it.'<sup>87</sup>

Herein is the means by which mercy and truth, righteousness and peace kiss: in the union of divine intention with human location in incarnation. Whilst Irving identifies three types of human nature, that of the first Adam before he fell, that as it now is and has been since the fall, and lastly, that which will be in the resurrection,<sup>88</sup> it is with the second that Irving concerns himself in advocating a christology of efficiency. In the act of salvation, the Creator takes human being as it is and takes it, as Saviour, to what it shall *become*. Herein is the manifestation of the freedom of God: the capacity to assume human being in the very lowest form of its existence. The grace of God is revealed in his ability indeed to transcend himself and redeem humanity in a manner that is, to Irving, most obvious, for 'that Christ took our fallen nature is most manifest, because *there was no other in existence to take*'.<sup>89</sup> Therefore, only 'fallen human nature' suffices as the 'place of redemption'.<sup>90</sup>

Although Irving does not explicitly argue so, it is possible to understand his use of this category in two ways. Firstly, from an *anthropological* perspective, as that of *solidarity*. Woven throughout Irving's thought is this notion of solidarity, one he uses in two ways. On the one hand, human being stems from the one source, the first *Adām*. It is a *solidarity of nature*, and as such, participates collectively in the Adamic fall. Irving maintains a clear distinction between human person and human



nature,<sup>91</sup> a component of his christology which shall be discussed in detail at a later stage. It is of interest here, however, that whilst human being is particularised in terms of personhood, its commonality is the root stock of human nature. This organic anthropology, therefore, implies that once human being is overtaken by sin, it is not only a state common to all human kind, but that into which the Son is to come if the Christian Gospel is to offer an effective and adequate salvation. Whilst 'there is a kind of necessity to use the term flesh' when we talk in terms of incarnation,<sup>92</sup> Irving's desire is to spell out just what this means both in terms of the agent and agency of incarnation.

Irving's understanding of sin as the 'state of a creature, - the second state of a creature...common to us all',<sup>93</sup> a 'simple, single, common power ...diffused throughout, and present in, the substance of flesh of fallen human nature,'<sup>94</sup> enables him to interpret the Westminster Confession's assertion that,<sup>95</sup> 'The Son took upon him man's nature, with all the essential properties and *common infirmities* thereof,'<sup>96</sup> in terms of a 'fallen human nature'. The Son does so because he is incarnated into this organic mass.<sup>97</sup> Consequently, whilst Irving argues for the notion of participation in our humanity, he is able to accomodate the language of imputation, only in so far as he has set the limits for such terminology. Thus when he does use the language of imputation, in arguing that 'in the flesh of Christ, all flesh stood represented; - that, in the flesh of Christ, all the infirmities, sin, and guilt, of all flesh was gathered into one',<sup>98</sup> the negative connotations are lost in light of his thoroughly participatory notion of incarnation. Herein lies the manner which enables Irving to assert that although redemption occurs at the locus of fallen human nature wherein death comes as a consequence, it is still a voluntary death. It is the freewill act of an already self-existing being, who out of love for the Father's glory, and redemption of the world, becomes the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, doing so by means of participation with fallen human nature.<sup>99</sup>

Secondly, we may understand his use of the term 'fallen human nature' from a *hamartiological* or *cosmological* perspective. It is solidarity identified in relation to what we may best understand in Brannick's words as an



'apocalyptic notion of an evil aeon in which humanity exists and which explains the enormity and power of sin'. It is because apocalyptic imagery represents or manifests 'a person or a personal aspect' as an 'aeonic force' therefore that Paul can represent 'σάρξ' at once as a human mode of existence and as a cosmic, demonic force'.<sup>100</sup>

This is an important distinction, for it enables us to assess the biblical warranty in Irving's use of 'fallen human nature' to Christ as a means of establishing his solidarity with that requires salvation. For Irving, the *locus operans* of incarnation is the realm wherein humanity is held captive to a force greater than itself. Thomas Erskine of Linlathen, Irving's close compatriot, in a similar vein, argues that, 'the devil took possession of the flesh, and it is only through the death of the flesh that the devil can be overcome - the voluntary death of the flesh.'<sup>101</sup> Although we shall have more to do with this interpretation of sin at a later point in our discussion, here it is significant to point out that this aeonic dimension of creation makes a major contribution to Irving's understanding of the solidarity of human existence.<sup>102</sup>

It is therefore with this double sense of solidarity that Irving identifies what he means by the term 'fallen human nature': it is a solidarity with both the common fallen stock and common oppressor of human nature. It is a life of one characterised by the qualities exemplified in Judith, not in terms of divine condescension, but in actual identification with human being in its fallenness: 'For thy power depends not upon members, nor upon men of strength; for thou art God of the lowly, helper of the insignificant, upholder of the weak, saviour of those without hope, (Judith 9:11). As such, Irving's is a christology of offence: for as Gunton points out, 'the heart of the offence is not the divinity of Jesus, but the fact that the divinity is given through and with 'this lowly, poor, impotent man.' It is this which Christendom cannot face, for such a christology 'offends both the individual and the established order.'<sup>103</sup>

The locus and perimeters of incarnation and therefore christology are established within the solidarity of *fallen* humanity. In turn we can



identify two major concerns that motivate Irving in this identification: the theological and the soteriological.

Firstly, then, the theological, wherein we may identify three major concerns. On the one hand Irving wishes to highlight the divine opposition to sin in a manner that makes sense of the seriousness of the divine reaction to the human condition. It is at this point that we most clearly gain an insight in to the reason why Irving cannot be satisfied with a merely imputational christology, for imputation cannot show clearly the seriousness of sin before God. Thus Irving argues that the guilt of sin and the divine 'abhorrence of the sinner' are demonstrated in the Son being sent 'in the likeness of sinful flesh...by making the Word flesh; by making Him consubstantial with the sinner.'<sup>104</sup>

Secondly, he desires to demonstrate that the Son is Lord both of spirit and matter. Consequently, the nature assumed in incarnation cannot have been angelic, for this would constitute him only Lord of spirit. Rather, to be deemed Lord of matter, it is necessary for him to partake of the human nature, the *vinculum creationis*, between that which is purely spiritual and that which is purely material.<sup>105</sup>

Lastly, although a point that shall be discussed in detail later in this chapter, and one that weaves itself throughout Irving's thought, as we have noted in Parts I and II, there is the notion of will. In order to maintain his goal, Irving distinguishes nature from will so that he may identify the divine intention of incarnation. At his point we begin to move closer to the true locus in the dynamics of incarnation. However, at this stage, it suffices to highlight Irving's theological motive in identifying the humanity of Christ as a 'fallen' humanity.

By punishing man in his nature, as it were, rather than in his will, it shewed that the will was under the stern bondage of the untractable nature; under the obstinate, perverse law of the flesh; and could not be recovered otherwise than by the smiting, judging, and destroying of that flesh, or natural man, which sin had made its stronghold; that there could be no peace between the Creator and the creature until there was a redemption from the power of that natural law, which had overpowered the spiritual will and divine purpose under which the creature was



formed at first.<sup>106</sup>

In addition, when we turn to consider Irving's soteriological concern, we confront one of the over-riding concerns behind his understanding of incarnation in relation to its saving hope. This is the desire to expand its significance beyond what he calls a 'doctrine of debt and payment, of barter and exchange; of suffering for suffering, of clearing the account and setting things straight with God'.<sup>107</sup> Rather, his concern is with that of assurance, with the sufficiency of the Gospel, as that which is attainable through one who has already overcome sin in the flesh and in so doing not only redeems a fallen creation back to God but effects the dynamics necessary for attaining holiness in the flesh. It is no source of comfort to the penitent sinner to know that one who was unfallen upheld the law: for such a one is an unfallen creature and therefore unfamiliar with the struggles and mortality of those under the curse of the law.<sup>108</sup> As Irving rightly points out, the mystery of human being is found between the *foci* of the one and the many, of being alone and being with. Consequently, the efficiency of any given Christology is undermined if the focus remains on only one of these foci, for, 'we are not unfallen creatures bearing another's sin; but we are fallen creatures, bearing our own...And by loading an unfallen man with ever so much sin of another, you do not make him a fallen man; and that he should bear it, and that he should keep the law without offence, is no proof to me that I shall be called to keep the same law'.<sup>109</sup>

Secondly, in that Irving identifies the place of redemption as that of fallen human nature, he attempts to make sense of the sufferings of Christ, who although possessing a *fallen* human nature suffers whilst remaining sinless. The question for Irving is not *whether* he suffered, for 'Christ suffered for the sins of others'. Rather, his question is, 'How can suffering for another reach an unfallen creature?'<sup>110</sup> In order to answer this question, Irving unites two distinct ideas: that death comes to those who have not willfully acted against God, and that suffering cannot come to an *unfallen* creature. We may summarise his argument thus:

1. Sin is the deliberate act of the will.
2. Suffering and death are the possession of a fallen creature.
3. Human nature is proven fallen in that it suffers and dies.
4. No unfallen creature can suffer.
5. Remove this distinction and the difference between fallen and unfallen is removed.
6. Children die.
7. Children do not exercise their will.
8. Therefore there must be a distinction between will and nature.
9. Therefore it is possible to have a fallen nature, thus suffer and die, yet not disobediently exercise one's will.

In the first of his criteria, we confront again the centrality of an ontology of will in his argumentation, whilst at the same time are faced with a somewhat tortuous and a *posteriori* form of reasoning in order to answer his question. Death and suffering come by sin. But sin is the acting of a sinful will. Thus, suffering can only come to human beings in one way, the way of Adam: by a sinful act of the will. But in an age of infant mortality, and to one who knew at first hand the reality of such death, such a hypothesis could not stand the facts were it to rest at this point. Irving was well aware that suffering and death come to those who have had little opportunity to willfully act against their Maker. Yet suffering and death *do* come to such. Therefore, Irving allows this fact to speak for itself: the solidarity of human nature testifies to the fact that 'suffering can come to a fallen creature, without any sinful act of its own...and that death can come to a fallen creature without any sinful act of its own', the proof being manifest in every child that dies.'''

Irving then combines this with a second criterion, namely, that suffering cannot come to one who is unfallen: for, 'there is not such a thing in the records of being, as that an unfallen creature should suffer. The will must fall first by sinning, before suffering can be felt'.<sup>12</sup> It is here we meet the most tortuous of Irving's argument. He holds as a *priori* the premis that suffering and death cannot come to an unfallen creature. Therefore, the answer is to be found in our understanding of what it means to be fallen. Both the *particular* and *universal* character of sin are



identified in terms of *will*. It is particular in that by a deliberate choice of will, each human being sins against its God. However, this is an insufficient definition of the fallenness of human being, for it cannot apply to those who are incapable of willful disobedience. Therefore, Irving identifies a universal character to will: it is fallen in that it is a part of that which Irving identifies as 'fallen human nature'. Suffering and death come as a result of our solidarity with the first Adam: all humankind is born with a fallen will. Thus the *universal* character of sin is realised in human *nature*. The sin of the one involves the imputation of the many, for 'God visits the sins of the fathers ...upon those who have as yet no power of will whereby to commit a sin.'<sup>13</sup> Thus Irving explains suffering and death for those who have committed no individual act of sin, by means of distinguishing between human will and human nature. Suffering and death prove the fallenness of human being. If suffering and death come by an act of will, then children are unfallen. But if they are unfallen, they should not die. What proves them to be fallen? Simply that they suffer and die. The circuitous argument is concluded by arguing that if an unfallen creature can suffer and die, then the only proof between that which is fallen and that which is unfallen is removed. Therefore, in light of both the fact only fallen creatures can suffer and die, and that children who have never willfully sinned suffer and die, there must be a distinction between nature and will.

What then may we identify as the place wherein the Divine achieves redemption? It is through identification with *fallen* humanity. Christ must be 'as truly a fallen man, as He is truly God.'<sup>14</sup> Herein trinitarian intention and human location concur, within a soteriological syntax.

To make flesh was the great end, work, and accomplishment of the Incarnate God, and was brought about by the consenting and harmonious operation of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, according to their eternal and necessary relations and operations; the Father sending the Son;...the Son assuming flesh;...the Holy Ghost proceeding from the Father and Son, to be its life and strength, and holiness, its resurrection and glory. To this flesh we have applied the word "sinful," or "of sin," in order to express the state *out of which God took it*; the words "sinless and holy," to express the state *into which God brought it*.<sup>15</sup>



What is the divine intention in incarnation? It is to bring 'flesh' out of the state of sin into that of holiness. 'What he took to work upon was sinful, sinful flesh and blood; what he wrought it into was sinless.'<sup>116</sup> This is one criterion by which we are to establish the efficiency of his Christology. What he identifies as the place of redemption, however, is only the first of three criteria that we must identify if we are to assess adequately whether or not Irving establishes a christology of efficiency. It is therefore to the second of these we now turn.

### 3.3. THE AGENT OF INCARNATION: THE ONE WHO ASSUMES.

If the efficiency of our christology is determined by salvific criteria that arise from the locus of human being, then surely our theology should attempt to show how Jesus Christ is 'significant for salvation,' how he is the ground of its reality and being.'<sup>117</sup> This, however, is no mandate for an anthropocentric diagnosis of the human condition, of identifying the human need and then adding a divine solution. Rather, it is a thoroughly theocentric diagnosis, for it is a diagnosis based both on a *divinely* given Law which makes known the dilemma of human being and identifies the One who fulfills the Law. The Spirit we receive in salvation is the Spirit of the One who fulfilled this Law. The Church catholic has sought to respond to this by affirming faithfully the belief that the significance of Jesus Christ resides in the status of his *person*: that God is not in Christ in the same way as he is in ordinary men and women, or even saints. It is as a response to 'this THE christological problem'<sup>118</sup> that Irving presents his understanding of the one who stands at the centre of the Christian faith, and does so in a manner that faces the task not ignorantly, but squarely and fully. It is in this manner that Irving's is an attempt to address what McIntyre identifies as the severe strain under which classical christology has come in modern settings, a crisis 'resolvable only by a radical reassessment of the basic *shape* of the doctrine as expressed today.'<sup>119</sup>

It is a question about the 'Who?' of incarnation, a question identified by Bonhoeffer as the question about transcendence. In that incarnational talk involves that of the Son, Bonhoeffer argues that the immanent question,



the 'How are you possible?' is insufficient. Rather, 'the question, "Who?", expresses the strangeness of the one encountered, and at the same time it is shown to be the question concerning the very existence of the questioner.'<sup>120</sup> This is not to suggest however that we seek to divorce the question of immanence from that of transcendence: Irving understood only too well the necessity of an intimate and essential relation between the 'who' and the 'how' of christology. Rather, it is a case of *both/and*. The 'ontological must precede the functional,'<sup>121</sup> and that the ontological and the functional must be combined.<sup>122</sup> Therefore as we turn to that which Irving identifies as the 'Who' and the 'How' of incarnation we hold, as a point of method, this sense of *both/and* constantly in mind. In so doing the means by which Irving brings about his paradigm change, by which he gives meaningful place to the relation between the Son and Spirit, will be better highlighted. However, the two are kept distinct in our present method only in order that we may highlight more effectively the remaining two components we have identified in Irving's christology. Here, it is with the 'Who?' of incarnation that we are concerned.

Irving's understanding of the 'Who' of incarnation is a consideration of this identification towards both a theological and soteriological end. We have discussed in detail Irving's argument as to why in order that there to be a *personal* revelation of the Father's love towards his creation the Son must share the same order of being as the Father.<sup>123</sup> In Part II we have highlighted his understanding of human being in its becoming that which the Creator desires, an end achieved only in and through the person and work of Christ, who as Second Adam establishes a new order of creation.<sup>124</sup> What we have noted in both is that Irving unites the ontological with the functional by means of not only the person of the Son, but also the person and work of the Spirit.

Our concern here, therefore, is with delineating the dynamics by which Irving achieves this union between the Son and the Spirit in incarnation. It is a concern with ontology: with the *agent* of incarnation. Herein lies the foundation upon which Irving's entire christology rests: on the identity of the one who saves. Here we meet with a dual use of agent which enables Irving to show how the divine and the human do truly meet



in saving action in the person of Jesus Christ. Only in light of the clear distinction Irving holds between the being of God and human being, is it possible to make sense of the double identity he attributes the agent of salvation: identities which serve to establish the very heart of his appreciation of the person of Christ, and which facilitate the pneumatic dimension which serves to unite his doctrines of God and human being.

The efficacy of what Jesus Christ does stands or falls on whom we identify him to be. Whilst Irving's is an unequivocal identification of the divine Son as the agent of redemption, at the same time, it is not a univocal identification with what we may describe as an Alexandrian christology. Characteristically, Irving refuses to be labelled in such a manner. Indeed, to do so would be not only to misrepresent Irving but to miss the entire thrust of his doctrine of Christ, for Irving's is a subtle blending of two complementary but importantly distinct approaches to the person of Christ.

The method assumed in our present study has been assumed in order to facilitate clarity of perception regarding Irving's understanding of the agent of incarnation, and consequently salvation. Thus we have sought to distinguish quite separately Irving's doctrines of God and human being. Both reflect the fact that Irving's theology can hardly be identified as that belonging solely to one particular school of thought. Consequently, on the one hand, his doctrine of God enables him to establish an essentially theological foundation for his christology. Our discussion in Part I has highlighted the manner in and by which Irving identifies the being of God in his trinitarian relations. In so doing, Irving develops a framework which enables him to stress the primacy of the person of the Son.

Yet on the other hand, our discussion in Part II highlights that which Irving identifies as the object and goal of salvation. This has been taken up, in turn, in the immediately preceding discussion where we have sought to identify the *locus* of incarnation. To this extent, it may be argued that Irving still remains firmly rooted in a thoroughgoing Alexandrian 'Logos-sarx' christology. To some extent such a view is justified, as we shall see below, but it is not the whole story, for to rest at this point



would be, firstly, to undermine that which Irving has argued in Part I. that his is not a mere Logos christology alone. Rather it is the revelation by a Son of the love of the Father God. However, secondly and of much more importance both to Irving's own christology and the purposes of our thesis, to label his christology as Alexandrian is to ignore the place he attributes to the Spirit in his relation to the *humanum* of the Saviour. Up to this point in our discussion, such a stress has not been fully demonstrated, and shall not be so done until we first determine exactly the identity of the agent of incarnation. It is therefore our aim at this juncture to highlight how Irving identifies the agent of incarnation from both perspectives taken up in our thesis in Parts I and II: from the perspective of the divine and that of the human. In so doing, our aim is to show the complementary roles they carry in identifying the agent of incarnation.

*Who is the Agent of Incarnation?* In answering this question, Irving is seen to stand clearly within the tradition of a Chalcedonian christology. For the purposes of our thesis, it is best to analyse Irving's answer to this question from a dual perspective, which, whilst not systematically presented in his writings, stands as a complementary whole.

### 3.3.1. The Theological Perspective.

Firstly, the theological: Irving is adamant that, 'the only person in Christ is the person of the Son of God; whose identity doth not change by his becoming man'.<sup>125</sup> Irving does not waver on this point. A constant identification of the person of incarnation as the divine Son lies at the heart of his christology. Without it, there can be no revelation of the Father, for only God is capable of revealing himself. Whilst the person at the very heart of the Christian Gospel must be the Son of God, Irving's thoroughgoing use of the principle of *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa* implicates the Father and the Spirit. Thus, he argues:

He was the person of the Eternal Son, manifesting forth the will of the Father and the work of the Holy Ghost, as well as the Word of the Son, in manhood, yea, in fallen manhood. He took up the creature in its lowest estate in order to justify God therein, by proving how good even that estate was.<sup>126</sup>



It is a stress on the divine status of the Saviour: a reiteration of ancient formulae that Christ is one person in two natures. What is important to note at this point is the use Irving makes of the notion of 'person'. On the one hand, for theological reasons, Irving wishes to safeguard both the divine agent and agency of incarnation, whilst at the same, for soteriological reasons, he wishes to safeguard the full *humanum* of the agent of incarnation. The means by which he attempts to do so must have served only to exacerbate the hostility which first arose against Irving's christology: for the status of the one who becomes incarnate is starkly juxtaposed to that into which he is incarnated. This is perhaps expressed no more clearly than when Irving argues thus:

The person acting and suffering is the eternal and unchangeable Second person of the Godhead. He is the *I* who was in the bosom of the Father from all eternity; and in every action He is conscious God. When He saith, "I will," it is the Godhead that willeth. From the infinite Godhead, therefore, is the origin of every volition and action of Christ. The fountain is there in the infinite. And how proceedeth it into the finite?<sup>127</sup>

The answer to that question, however, can be answered only after we have highlighted the remaining two aspects of Irving's thought at this stage. It is this double thrust of intention, however, that has to be remembered when we turn to consider how Irving understands the *locus operans* and the *modus operans* of incarnation in their relation to the agent of incarnation.

### 3.3.2. The Soteriological Perspective.

Pursuing a firmly Chalcedonian christology, Irving is adamant about who the agent of incarnation is *not*. He is not a human *person*. Here we confront both a theological and soteriological consideration, already highlighted in Part II. Why cannot the Son be a human person? Firstly, for the theological reason given above, that since only God can save, God alone must be the author of salvation: human being is unable to attain such a goal. Secondly, on soteriological grounds, Irving returns to that which he identifies as the grounds not only of our *natural* human solidarity, but also the *personal*: his distinction between original guilt, that in which the Saviour participates, and *original sin*, that in which only human *persons*



participate. Thus whilst in a human person there is the unity of original sin and guilt, (for original sin and the act of sinning are, for Irving, inseparable), there is, in the Saviour, only the taint of original guilt, as we have noted above. Thus, the Son is 'acquitted from all charge of original sin, by the fact of his not having been created,' for:

as Christ was man, and not a man, he cannot be spoken of as a human person, without being brought in guilty of original sin. As a divine person he is clear of it, and no one can impute it to him. His not having natural generation, clears him of it altogether.<sup>128</sup>

The question to be asked here is whether Irving is guilty of Apollinarianism, for in denying that the Son assumes a human *person*, does he not deny there to be lacking that which is essential to being human? This we shall address later in our discussion, for before we can do so we must first assess Irving's intention in making such a statement.

His historical setting establishes him as a child of both the ancient and the modern. Irving stands within the fold of orthodox christology in this assertion. His is a thoroughly ancient understanding of the agent of salvation. Yet by virtue of being a child of his age, his anthropology is assessed by a criterion alien to that of his ancient predecessors, namely a psychological understanding of personhood. The question to be asked at this point is whether this is a criterion that Irving himself uses. In that he stresses there is no *human* person in incarnation, one could argue that Irving omits from his christology an element presumed in earlier expressions which held to the full humanity of Christ. However, as we have seen in Part II, and discussed earlier in this chapter, Irving uses the notion of 'original sin' as a *theological* tool in order to identify the solidarity of humanity in its bondage to sin. Furthermore, Irving partners original sin with human personhood. His doctrine of sin and its resultant interpretation of human personhood forces Irving to deny to Christ a purely *human* person. In so doing, he extricates the Saviour from the charge of being a sinner, whilst maintaining his solidarity with fallen humanity.



Irving, as the child of a particular age, stands firmly upon the traditions of the past whilst asking questions and seeking answers too ripe for the indocile age in which he found himself. When we turn to the question of agency, we confront, of necessity, the question as to where is the human person of Christ. Needless to say, this is hardly a *modern* question: it lies at the heart of the most ancient of Antiochene christologies. But the question assumes a different hue in light of the opposing mind-sets held by ancient and modern questioners. To the former, it is an ontological question, which, in the history of dogma has been considered never quite adequately resolved. To the latter, it is a psychological question, and one presumed by those who have crossed the Rubicon of Enlightenment, impossible to resolve. With Irving, there is room to argue that perhaps unwittingly, by virtue of the place he attributes the Spirit in his christology, he furnishes us with pointers as to how we may pursue means of holding the two opposing mind-sets together.

It is our contention, firstly, that Irving uses 'person' as a *theological* tool with a specific function: its meaning lies embedded firmly in the soteriological context within which it is used. Only God can be both author and agent of human salvation. Secondly, it is our contention that Irving holds together two ancient and hitherto disparate christological methods by means of the place he give the Spirit in relation to the humanity of Christ. His insistence that there is no human person involved in incarnation should be understood in terms of the more ancient and ontological use of 'person' in what we may call 'Alexandrian' or 'Logos-flesh' christologies. In denying human personhood to Christ, it is not Irving's wish to undermine the humanity of Christ. It is, rather, an anhypostatic interpretation of the humanity of Christ. If his were a psychological interpretation of incarnation, this would be a damning omission. However, when he talks of human personhood in this way, he expounds an ontological view of incarnation, and one in which he seeks to safeguard the divine agent of salvation through incarnation. As we shall argue later, Irving complements this christological perspective with that of another perspective which underwrites the humanity of the Saviour. However, here, Irving merely extends the logic of Chalcedon. It is a stress upon the *divine* agent of incarnation.



Unless we appreciate Irving's concern as he approaches the question of agency we shall misunderstand him, for his is a concern with both the purely theological and soteriological intentions of incarnation. With respect to his theological questions, the person of incarnation is the divine Son. Of this Irving is emphatic. But when we turn to consider the soteriological intention with which Irving is so concerned, we discover a double concern, wherein one dominates the other but not to its exclusion. What do we mean by this? Simply this, that as one who is steeped in the ancient tradition of the Church, Irving primarily understands this question about the person of incarnation from a *theological* perspective: it is an ontological question. Thus he gives an ontological answer: it is the divine Son. To this extent, he talks of incarnation in purely Chalcedonian terms: of one person and two natures. Here 'nature' is understood ontologically, as that which constitutes the Christ as a full human being. Thus, when the identity of the agent of incarnation is considered from within this ontological context, Irving clearly stresses the *person* of the divine Son. Irving's stress on the divine agent of incarnation in light of the human need for salvation demands that priority be placed on the personhood of the Son, for it is *God* who saves.

However, when Irving considers the question as to the identity of the agent of incarnation from a *soteriological* concern he appears to make a considerable shift in emphasis, but due to the fact that his main concern throughout his writings is with the divine agency of incarnation, this second consideration is less obvious. However, it is only within this context that the pneumatic dimension to Irving's christology makes sense, for it is a context within which he wishes to stress the full humanity of the one who brings salvation.

Irving, therefore, combines his ontological concern with a soteriological inquiry in a manner that demands making a distinction between human nature and human person.<sup>129</sup> If his separate concerns are not identified, Irving's soteriological concern may serve to vitiate his christology by blurring the ontological primacy. In stressing the divine agent with respect to his soteriological intention, Irving exposes his perception of the humanity of the Saviour to an element of dubiety. It is our belief,



however, that this is not the case. True, his bold stress on the *humanum* of incarnation in terms of 'fallen human nature' coupled with an even bolder insistence that there is no human *person* involved in incarnation serves possibly to damn Irving's christology as a form of Apollinarianism. This criticism, however, is founded upon a misrepresentation of his intention and therefore serves only to confuse that which Irving seeks to clarify. Irving's intention is, on the whole, to safeguard the assurance of salvation. To do so, he holds in tension two complementary christological perceptions. These we have sought to clarify in terms of the agent of incarnation and the object of incarnation, the *locus operans* and the *modus operans* of incarnation.

The theological and subsequently ontological concerns set the parameters: there is no independent human person. However, the soteriological concerns give us insight into Irving's understanding of human nature. And it is an important inquiry, for in response to the immediate and crudely Apollinarian accusation that in this christology the person of the Son must replace the human person, in a manner that the divine Logos replaces the human logos, Irving must be seen to maintain a full humanity if his christology is ever to be deemed efficient.

Our argument is thus: that from a theological and ontological perspective, Irving holds to the sole personhood of the divine Son, with his definition of human nature meaning all that it does to the ancients, namely that whatever it is that constitutes us as human beings that too we find in Christ. As a result, Irving refutes any accusation of Apollinarianism by the ontological thrust of his thoroughly Chalcedonian christology: the Saviour is one person in two natures.<sup>130</sup> Herein 'person' is understood in purely ontological terms. However, Irving's assertion that there is no human person demands explanation if his christology is not to be discarded as merely a re-mouthing of an ancient and, to some, redundant christology.

Up to this stage in our inquiry, we have focused upon what we have identified as the ontological or theological dimension to Irving's doctrine of Christ in its relation to his understanding of salvation. So Irving stresses the divine agent of salvation in terms of a Chalcedonian



interpretation of personhood. It is the divine person of the Son who in his incarnate form, brings about our redemption, as he obeys the Father's will by the help of the Spirit.

When his attention turns to his salvific concerns, Irving seeks to establish how Christ can be in solidarity with our need of salvation whilst at the same time be free from the penalty of sin. When we remember that Irving's hamartiology facilitates the possibility of one being both 'sinless' (being free of original sin and therefore actual sin) and at the same time be 'sinful' (being familiar with human guilt, the natural consequence upon human nature of a Fall) then are we able to consider the question as to how can the Saviour be one with us in our fallenness whilst at the same time not be guilty of the sin of that common stock. By means of a bald Logos-flesh-type christology Irving thus talks of the agent of incarnation in the following manner:

You have original sin taken away in Him by the manner of His conception. He is not, as it were, an individual of the sinful individuals; He is not a human person; He never had personal subsistence as mere man; He see the whole mass and lump of fallen, sinful flesh; He submits Himself unto the Father to be made flesh; His Father sendeth the Holy Spirit to prepare a body.<sup>131</sup>

What then are we to infer from this eradication of the essence of sin from Christ? Does this suffice to establish Irving's christology efficient for a meaningful doctrine of salvation? For Irving, to stop at this point would be to sound the death-knell for his appreciation of the relation between Christ and the believer. The mere removal of original sin, for Irving, is insufficient to establish Christ's sinlessness. Unlike Schleiermacher, Irving understands the uniqueness of Christ to reside not only in his divine status, but in the manner by which he inaugurates a new humanity through the sanctifying presence of the Spirit. We are now at a point of being able to focus more specifically the means by which Irving establishes his argument.

#### 4. THE MEANS OF INCARNATION.

##### 4.1. The act of self-limitation.

Irving's christology stands in direct line of succession of those theologies since Chalcedon, which, in the words of Schoonenberg, have expressed 'the plenitude of Christ by attributing to him, divine nature and human nature'. Yet his is also one which attempts to combine the duality of dogmatic teaching with the plenitude of the writings of the New Testament which present the life of Christ in an altogether different dualism, namely that of his 'life on earth and of his presence in heaven, the condition of the "servant" and his power, his self-emptying and his exaltation'.<sup>132</sup>

By virtue of his understanding of the *who* of incarnation, Irving is able to delineate his perception of the 'how', the dynamics of incarnation. Herein do we gain insight into Irving's understanding of the *modus operandi* of incarnation.

Firstly, lest we should lose sight of the essentially trinitarian dimension of incarnation, we should remind ourselves of the trinitarian foundation expanded in Part I, a foundation upon which Irving establishes his entire doctrine of incarnation.

Before the infinite Godhead in the Son could act in the finite form, whether before taking that form or after, He must act not of Himself only, but with the consent and concurrence of the other persons of the Trinity. And this is not a small matter, but is in fact that which determineth all the rest.<sup>133</sup>

Of importance here is the manner by which Irving presents the Son's mode of incarnation in terms which make full use of the 'soteriological drama'<sup>134</sup> expounded in the christological hymn of Philippians 2. For it is only in relation to the soteriological goal of incarnation that the theological notion of kenosis, and consequently any use of the notion of kenosis must strictly accord with soteriological intentions.



How then does Irving set out to accomplish this? Far from being required at this stage to introduce any new datum in order to answer this question, we need only allude to that which Irving makes of the pre-incarnate act of obedience on the part of the Son in order to create and become the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world.<sup>135</sup> Of importance here is Irving's use of *kenosis* within a wider context than that of incarnation alone. We may identify this as the first of two ways in which he uses the notion of self-limitation or *kenosis*.

Firstly, he contextualises the notion of self-limitation within the counsels of the Godhead itself. Although this could be interpreted as an act of gross presumption on the part of Irving in attempting to illumine the very being of God, it is better interpreted in light of Irving's thoroughgoing ontology of will. Two considerations are worth noting here. On the one hand, Irving wishes to facilitate a union of being between Creator and Saviour. On the other, and at the same time, he wishes to give primacy to the place of Christ in a way that shows that the Christian hope of redemption is not a second attempt by God to get things right. Therefore, before creation, there was established in the very being and counsels of God, a way of redemption.

Irving establishes such a possibility with the notion of *kenosis* on the part of the Son. The incarnation is a *willing* act of self-limitation which highlights the divinity of the agent of incarnation: it is the self-limitation of a *divine* person in terms of solidarity with that which is to be created and redeemed, for we may attribute the actions of creation and redemption solely to *divine* agency. Irving's christology is safeguarded from the threat of minimalism wherein the status of Christ may not be elevated any higher than that of supreme humanity, whilst at the same time is safeguarded the truly human context within which redemption is wrought.<sup>136</sup>

Irving's understanding of *kenosis* parallels Moule's later interpretation of Philippians 2:6, that, 'Jesus did not reckon that equality with God meant snatching; on the contrary, he emptied himself', an interpretation that Moule rightly states renders 'God-likeness essentially as giving and



spending oneself out'.<sup>137</sup> And if this is the case, as Hanson comments, then the point Paul is making here is 'that divinity is supremely manifested in human self-giving, in fact in the human self-giving of Christ'.<sup>138</sup> For Irving this can be only in so far as it is the human self-giving of the incarnate Son, for only a divine agent is able to be so selfless. As Richard points out, 'selflessness is not the absence of the self as subject, but the absence of the self as object of anxious preoccupation. The selfless self can let go.'<sup>139</sup> It is this that is the scandal of the New Testament: the scandal of the God who comes to us not in apocalyptic power, but as one who as 'utterly humiliated man...is not a derogation from or even a modification of the glory of God, but precisely the fullest expression of that glory as love.'<sup>140</sup> For Irving, then, the notion of kenosis is not to be understood in any notion of divine redundancy on the part of the Son. Quite the contrary, it is the complete opposite: the principle of *operata trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa* obviates any such notion. Rather, is it an expression of willing obedience on the part of the Son to bring about creation and redemption. As such it highlights the love of God in its capacity to follow human being into its own 'far country'<sup>141</sup> and in solidarity with that which requires restoration, return it to its proper position and place of being.

How then does Irving give content to his notion of kenosis? He gives fullest expression to this first application of kenosis in the following lengthy but appropriate quotation:

The Son..did before creation assume unto Himself that limited form of the Christ, in which the Father saw before time, and independent of time, before change, and independent of change. His work complete in that beauty and perfectness to which it shall yet attain. And in this all-containing form of being, image of the invisible God, fulness of the Godhead, the Son did create and order creation to the end of His becoming flesh, did take flesh, did redeem it, did glorify it, and is now bringing all things to be under it..There are apparent changes, as His taking flesh; but this is not a real change of His being as the Christ of God; that is to say, he who taketh flesh, is the very same whom God set up before the world was, by whom God created the world, who spake by the prophets. No change did His spiritual being undergo, in these acts of creating the world, redeeming flesh and the world. His spiritual being is that fulness of Godhead, which was the device and the joy of Godhead, in the purpose, and in the enjoyment of before the light was



created..The rest is but the acting of the Son, thus limiting Himself, unto the end of bringing that form of being which He had assumed into outwardness from the Godhead itself; that is, into creation.'<sup>42</sup>

If Irving accomodates a pre-creation act of willing self-limitation on the part of the Son in his function as the one through, in and by whom all things were made and have their being, then his second use of kenosis is expressed in the manner by which the Son becomes incarnate. Here are we able not only to point to the central means by which Irving understands the dynamics of incarnation, as much pneumatological as christological, but also that by which we shall assess whether Irving's christology is indeed a christology of efficiency. Henceforth we turn our focus from its explicitly theological and ontological dimension to its more immediate soteriological goal.

In this the second use of kenosis, Irving uses the idea of self-emptying in order to express the mode of incarnation. The Son lays aside the 'mantle of His uncreated and incommunicable glory,' takes on the 'veils of flesh,' clothes Himself in the likeness of man,'<sup>43</sup> by means of action on the part of both his divinity and humanity, the one by 'self-contraction' to the measure of the other, and the other 'by coming into harmony with the former through the mighty power of the Holy Ghost.'<sup>44</sup> He 'emptieth Himself out of His Divine nature, and passeth into the human nature' and in so doing becomes 'a very man with man's very limitations'.<sup>45</sup> When the focus is turned to this consideration of incarnation, what is of concern for Irving is the manner in which the incarnate Son, as man, performs the Father's will. Therefore, in similar manner as the ontological use of kenosis involves not only the Son but, by virtue of the *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa* the Father and the Spirit, so this second, soteriological use of filial self-limitation in incarnation, is never separated from its pneumatic counterpart of inspiration. It is in this sense that Irving delineates the pneumatic dimension of incarnation. On the one hand, his strictly trinitarian ontology, as demonstrated in Part I, attributes an essential role to the Spirit. In his divine person, the Son is at all times essentially related to the Father through the Spirit. When, in turn we consider his status in incarnation, we should expect there



to be a similarly pneumatic dimension with regards the person of Christ. Although this cannot be read off from the New Testament accounts of the life of Jesus<sup>146</sup> for Irving it is the only means by which we may establish and maintain an adequate doctrine of salvation. Our appreciation of Christ's role as Saviour is essentially wrapped up in our comprehension of him as a divine person of the Trinity. The problem here, however, is how we identify this pneumatic character of incarnation. Is it to be identified in terms of the *divine*, or of the *human*, or of *both*? Irving's solution is to identify, by means of his thoroughgoing trinitarian ontology and his developmental and teleological interpretation of human being, a perceptual change within the existing theological paradigm which facilitates meaningful talk of the divine and human relations of the Son with the Spirit in performing the Father's will in incarnation.

Irving's analysis of incarnation enables him to introduce an element of assurance to the Gospel proclamation of forgiveness and new life by means of his apologetic defence of the incarnation of the Son of God into the realm of human fallenness. His appreciation of the manner in which this occurs drives him to consider not only the pneumatological but also sanctificational dimension to the incarnation. In the act of 'self-emptying and man-fulfilling' there is opened the possibility of understanding the full humanity of the Saviour, as one whose divinity is limited in order that the humanity supported by the Spirit 'might endure the weight of the offended holiness and justice of God.' The divinity is restrained in order that the humanity may be sacrificed for sin upon the 'passive golden altar' of divinity.<sup>147</sup>

What is Irving's purpose in stressing the notion of kenosis? It is this: that there is a two fold character to every act of Christ, wherein he limits himself of his divine status in order that the human nature may perform the act through the power of the Spirit.<sup>148</sup> If it is by means of his doctrine of God as Trinity and his teleological interpretation of human being, as outlined in Parts I and II, that Irving develops this act of divine condescension, then the task befalls us to show how and if he brings them together in a manner that facilitates a perceptual change of



the traditional christological and incarnational paradigm, and consequently an efficient christology.

#### 4.2. The Place of Self-limitation: the Soul of Christ.

Now are we able to express Irving's innermost understanding of the *principium quod* and *principium quo* of incarnation. It is, as it were, his response to the metaphysical question, that 'given the integrity of the human existence, how is it possible to speak of the presence of the divine?'<sup>149</sup> The solution as to how we may understand the union between the human and divine is one to which Irving sets high standards, for in the same way that it is necessary to tune two different musical instruments in order to attain a harmonious sound, so it is with the human and divine. The question Irving sets himself to answer is thus: 'How shall human nature, in the fallen state, be brought to be in harmony with the acting of the holy Godhead?' In that the human will has never acted in harmony with the divine will, this is of supreme consequence, for it involves the means of displaying how humanity may 'respond, truly and justly, in all things' to the divine. Irving's answer is unequivocal: they are brought together as one, 'in the person of Christ, where we have them..brought together without any original sin'.<sup>150</sup> What concerns us now, is the means by which Irving believes this to have occurred, for it is here that he expounds his doctrine of the Spirit in his relation to the incarnate Son. In so doing, we are furnished with that by which we shall assess the efficiency of Irving's christology. The question to be asked, therefore, is whether or not his answer is sufficient to establish it an efficient one in relation to the human need of redemption as offered in and through the person of Jesus Christ.

If, on the one hand, we may identify Irving's christology as that of an incarnational, Logos-flesh christology which safeguards the divine status of the agent of incarnation, then on the other hand, we may also identify his christology as that of an inspirational Logos-man type which attempts to safeguard both the object and means of incarnation, namely, fallen human being. It is to this inspirational element of his christology we now turn. In so doing, we confront the means by which Irving attempts to

forge a way through the Scylla of transcendence wherein the agent of salvation is too other worldly to be of any earthly use, and the Charybdis of immanence wherein the agent of salvation is too entrenched in the trammels of human existence to be anything but the example of human shipwreck, and an unsuccessful one at that. This Irving does by means of using the *human soul* of Christ as a theological tool, whereby he is able to combine an inspirational dimension to his thoroughgoing incarnational christology.

*Verbum assumpsit corpus mediante anima*: the Word assumed the body by the intermediary of the soul. Irving stands in a historic line of interpretation in his stress on the soul of Christ as not only the *locus* wherein Christ is the *viator* of human being, but also the *modus* wherein Christ becomes the *comprehensor* of human being. However, in characteristic manner, he diverges from it in his attempt to outline the dynamics of such an assumption.

In *First Principles*, Origen argues that a medium is required in order for the Son to acquire human flesh, for 'it was not possible for the nature of God to mingle with a body apart from some medium'. Origen identifies this medium as the soul of Christ which acted as 'a medium between God and the flesh'.<sup>151</sup> This use of the soul of Christ enabled incarnational talk, of Logos-soul-body, 'not to appear so incongruous'.<sup>152</sup> However, unlike Irving, Origen insists that although Christ had a human and rational soul, it had no 'susceptibility to or possibility of sin',<sup>153</sup>. In its preexistent state, the soul of Christ was perfectly united to the Logos, and thereby established free from sin.

Whilst his interpretation of a preincarnate union between soul and Logos is highly unorthodox, Origen stands well in the mainstream of interpretation in his identification of the quality of the soul assumed by the Son. For whilst Arius and Apollinarius fought over the very presence of a soul in the humanity of the incarnate Son,<sup>154</sup> there was a sense of unanimity in Patristic thought regarding both the presence and the nature of the soul of Christ. Augustine, in arguing that the greatness of divine power fitted to itself a rational soul, and through it a human body so as



to change the whole man into something better,<sup>155</sup> suggests that the divinity of the Son changes the humanity. Ambrose of Milan, however, represents a more explicit rendering, arguing that since there is no imperfection in Christ, when the Son became incarnate, it was perfect flesh that he assumed. In order to do so he assumed a soul, 'a perfect, human, and rational soul.'<sup>156</sup> And Aquinas, who, whilst asserting that the soul is the *anima media invenitur inter Deum et carnem*,<sup>157</sup> equally denies that 'the grace of the Holy Spirit is the mediating form in this personal union'.<sup>158</sup>

For Irving, the soul is the medium of disclosure and the locus of intention. By means of this 'theological tool'<sup>159</sup> we confront the most intense progression in Irving's theological interpretation of the dynamics of incarnation: a progression that holds together in his thinking both the divine agent and the soteriological intention of incarnation. It reveals both how the Son may become fully human and how human redemption is not only effected but also affected.

He was not merely filled with the Holy Ghost, but the Holy Ghost was the author of His bodily life, the quickener of that substance which He took from fallen humanity: or..the Holy Ghost uniting Himself forever to the human soul of Jesus, in virtue and in consequence of the Second Person of the Trinity having united Himself thereto, this threefold spiritual substance, the only-begotten Son, the human soul and the Holy Spirit - (or rather twofold, one of the parts being twofold in itself; for we may not mingle the divine nature with the human nature, nor may we mingle the personality of the Holy Ghost with the personality of the Son) - the Eternal Son, therefore, humbling Himself to the human soul, the human soul taken possession of by the Holy Ghost, this spiritual substance (of two natures only, though of three parts) did animate and give life to the flesh of our Lord Jesus; which was flesh in the fallen state;...but the soul of Christ, thus anointed with the Holy Ghost, did ever resist and reject the suggestions of evil...Christ's soul was so held in possession by the Holy Ghost, and so supported by the Divine nature, as that it never assented unto an evil suggestion.<sup>160</sup>

Several important factors are woven together here, the most important being the place Irving attributes the soul: it is the locus of incarnation. The Son unites himself to a human soul which is assumed, in turn, by the Spirit. This is, however, no mere inspiration, for whilst the Spirit



possesses and anoints the soul of the incarnate Son, it is the Son, who in his humanity wields the Spirit. In so interpreting, Irving avoids the charge of ousting the filial agent in incarnation. *What is possessed of the Son, is empowered by the Spirit.* We confront, therefore, neither a merely incarnational nor a merely inspirational christology. Rather, it is a union of the two. The two criteria by which we have been assessing Irving's christology are combined: the divine and the human. In the former, we meet the trinitarian maxim: *the opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa.* The eternal will of the Father is communicated to the incarnate Son in and through the Spirit. Herein we confront the starkly *pneumatological* dimension of Irving's christology. Alternatively, the humanity is one that requires the Spirit's aid in order both to become that which its Creator intends, and to overcome that which Irving identifies as 'sin in the flesh' both for sanctification and as proof that the one who yields it is worthy of the title of Saviour. Thus, we confront the *sanctificational* dimension to Irving's christology. But more importantly, both are combined in such a way as to facilitate a perceptual change of incarnation in such a way as to bring about a paradigm shift wherein the person and work of the Spirit are given an essential place in Irving's interpretation of incarnation.

By means of both criteria, Irving overcomes the stumbling block that such sanctificational talk has presented to previous generations. For instance, John Cassian refutes such talk on the grounds that if 'the Holy Ghost gave assistance to the Lord Jesus Christ' then not only is the Saviour made out to be 'feeble and powerless' but that the Spirit granted things to Christ 'which he was unable to procure for himself'.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, this is the very point Irving wishes to secure: that both in his divine and human nature the incarnate Son is unable, of himself, to procure salvation. Such a claim stands in harmony with any strictly trinitarian interpretation of the incarnation: it is not the personal identity, or mode of being of the Son to procure salvation for human kind in and of himself. He is the one sent by the Father and empowered by the Spirit, both in his divine and human existence.

By this point in our discussion it should be clear that whilst Irving agrees that the human nature of the incarnate Son is totally fallen and



that 'without a thorough communication, inhabitation and empowering of a divine substance, it cannot again be brought up pure and holy', he stands firmly against the notion that 'the mere apprehension of it by the Son both make it holy.'<sup>162</sup> Such a belief would serve only to undermine the place of the Spirit in incarnation, result in the apotheosis of the humanity of Christ, and annul the trinitarian agency of salvation. For Irving, it is the Spirit who sanctifies and empowers the manhood of Christ, and in so doing, 'is the manifestation...of the Father and of the Son in His manhood'.<sup>163</sup>

Our previous discussion on the agency of incarnation should make clear that Irving at all times holds to the the Son as the personal agent of incarnation. The dignity of the Christ-event rests solely upon this fact: that it is the divine person of the Son as the God-man who is the agent of incarnation. In his divine nature, the Father's glory is communicated and revealed by the Son through the Spirit. In his human nature, the Father's plan of salvation is effected by the Son in the power of the Spirit. In his glorified nature, the Father's will is executed through the Son by this same Spirit who is now given to the Church. Herein does Irving maintain an essential unity of progression in thought by means of his thoroughly trinitarian interpretation of the Godhead's relation to creation. What is significant here is the manner by which Irving understands the manner by which divine being relates to human being in light of incarnation. Whilst in his divine being, the Son consents to do the Father's will through the Spirit, and in his incarnate being assumes human being through the medium of the soul through the Spirit, the same Spirit is given to the Church through the *man-soul* of the glorified Christ.

What we discover with Irving is an exposition of the soul of Christ in its fallen form for soteriological reasons. If the Son as the personal agent in incarnation is incapable of being the *sanctifying* or *empowering* agent then a 'logical space' has been opened within which the personal agency of the Spirit may be more fully delineated. It is this 'logical space' that concerns Irving, for herein he finds the means by which he may safeguard the trinitarian agency of incarnation, whilst at the same time establish the efficacy of the work of Christ as grounds for the assurance of



salvation. In so doing, 'by assigning a significant action to the Spirit' not only does Irving not 'detract from traditional orthodoxy,'<sup>164</sup> but expands that which lies at the heart of the Christian faith.

#### 4.2.1. Trinitarian Agency and the Soul of Christ.

We have little to say regarding Irving's strongly *incarnational* christology: by now it should be clear where Irving's primary stress lies.

When the fulness of time was come, the Christ, or Second Adam, had at first a body prepared from Him from the woman's substance, and a reasonable soul given unto Him by the Creator..To which the Son of God, the eternal word, having joined Himself in consubstantial union, He became the Son of man and the Son of God, in "two distinct natures and one person for ever."<sup>165</sup>

This is the platform from which he extrapolates the dynamics of salvation. But it is one where by virtue of his trinitarian interpretation of incarnation Irving understands both the *inspirational* to arise from the *incarnational*, and the *incarnational* to arise from the *inspirational*. However, he achieves this by virtue of his incarnational emphasis: it is the divine Son who becomes incarnate. The basic identity of his *credo* would be undermined were this fundamental tenet of his christology to be ignored or belittled. As Hebblethwaite correctly notes, if we cease to think in incarnational terms, and opt for an inspirational christology, then we lose both the moral and personal force, as well as the religious force of belief. The former reminds us that the Son became incarnate for *our* salvation, and that God took responsibility upon *himself* for our salvation: the latter that it is into the trinitarian life of God we are caught up, by Spirit and sacrament.<sup>166</sup>

In what way does Irving use the human soul as a theological tool to safeguard God's trinitarian identity in redemption? To answer this question we touch on the more general use made by Irving of the 'soul' of Christ. It is the medium of trinitarian agency. However, on this general level, Irving both combines several different approaches in order to serve the context addressed, and delineates a certain progression in thought,



starting from a general somatic use of language through to an explicit use of the soul as a theological tool. The following quote highlights the former in such a way as to throw light on Irving's basic pneumatological maxim: that every act of the Spirit is not his own, but the act and 'common pleasure' of the Father and Son.<sup>167</sup> So he argues:

The three persons of the blessed Trinity are all concerned..in the work; but, as it is the office of the Holy Ghost..to carry into effect what the Father willeth, and the Son informs with word, he brings the Son out of the region of Godhead, into the limited region of a child in the womb of the Virgin. The Son, though willing to add to his estate of Godhead the estate of manhood, cannot do this or any other thing but by the Holy Ghost; and the Father, willing to send his Son into this lowly estate, must do it by the Holy Ghost, otherwise the Holy Ghost's acting in the blessed Trinity were avoided..At the point where a work of the Godhead comes into manifestation, and..outwardness, the Holy Ghost is the actor; while it is in the purpose, it is with the Father; while it is in the word, it is in the Son; when it becomes act, it is with the Holy Ghost..Yet there are not three distinct separate stages of a divine work, but forms of expressing it, as it is the operation of three persons.<sup>168</sup>

However, this somatic language begins to take on further detail when Irving attempts to consider the means by which the incarnate Son makes known the Trinity.

Was it..that the incomprehensible Godhead of the Father was dwelling in the body of Jesus Christ, who said, He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father? No: the Holy Ghost dwelt in the body of Jesus Christ; and insomuch as the Holy Ghost proceedeth from the Father..is one substance with the Father, and speaketh and acteth only as He heareth the Father speak and seeth Him act, insomuch doth the Father dwell in the man Christ Jesus.<sup>169</sup>

In our attempt to understand Irving's use of the 'soul', we are unable to progress any further, for hitherto we are dealing with its purely theological development. What concerns us most is the details of the 'How?' of incarnation. In order to do so, we must now turn to consider the context within which Irving's use of the soul of Christ is made most specifically. In so doing, we confront the *sanctificational* dimension of Irving's Christology.



4.2.2. Sanctificational Agency and the Soul of Christ.

And if indeed there be  
An all pervading Spirit, upon whom  
Our dark foundations rest, could he design  
That this magnificent effect of power,  
The earth we tread, the sky that we behold  
By day, and all the pomp which night reveals;  
That these - and that superior mystery  
Our vital frame, so fearfully devised,  
And the dread soul within it - should exist  
Only to be examined, pondered, searched,  
Proved, vexed, and criticised?<sup>170</sup>

Wordsworth's sentiments echo well the entire thrust of Irving's christology. Our survey of Irving's doctrine of human being in Part II has revealed that the general *τέλος* of creation finds fulfillment in the specific *τέλος* of human being. By means of his christocentric method, Irving argues in turn that the *τέλος* of human being is specifically actualised in and through the person and work of the incarnate Image of God himself, the Son. It is a human *becoming* in relation to its goal: a goal actualised through the divine agency of the Son. But it is also a human *becoming* in relation from that which it *is*: fallen and in bondage to sin. Far from there being a second creation *ex nihilo* in order that human being may become that which the Creator intends, one in which the Son assumes a new and untainted humanity, Irving argues that human being becomes from out of that which it already *is*. It is in the recapitulation of that which already exists that human being becomes that which its Creator intends. As such, and in response to the question set by Wordsworth, there is indeed a hope for creation. But unlike Wordsworth, who represents Spirit as the Romantic, pantheistic force which undergirds creation, Irving presents us with an understanding of Spirit that transcends such an analysis, for it is the Spirit of the one who fulfills the Law of God, and in so doing brings a new *humanum* from out of that which is dead to sin and makes it alive to God by the very same Spirit.

*Verbum assumpsit corpus mediante anima.* Herein we confront not only the sanctificational dimension to Irving's christology, but also that which underpins his defence of the true humanity of Christ. It is the means by which Irving redresses the strongly incarnational thrust of his



christology. By means of the sanctificational thrust of his christology, Irving expands his understanding of human nature.

Irving identifies three consequences if Christ had no human soul: firstly, his human feeling and affections are a mere fiction. Secondly, his sufferings are a 'phantasmagoria', and therefore Christ is unable to lift the fallen creature to the throne of Grace. Lastly, at his death on the cross and in the tomb, the divine nature is separated from the human, and if this be so, then there is no assurance that two natures cannot separate again and therefore no stability for the creature: the risen God-manhood can be cast off like an unwanted and redundant garment. Consequently, Irving argues that Christ received his soul in exactly the same manner as children. Thus Irving safeguards his stress upon the soul of Christ from the accusation of a pre-incarnate assumption of the soul, resulting in an 'inspiritual' God before an incarnate God. In turn, the 'soul' of Christ was assumed and sanctified by the Spirit and from the moment of conception, 'so that He was in very deed a holy thing from the beginning of His creature being.'<sup>171</sup>

Why does Irving stress to such an extent the place of the soul in incarnation? The answer to this question lies at his very deepest concern: it is that which substantiates the very efficiency of his christology, for his understanding of both the soul's condition and need determines his understanding of incarnation. With the diagnosis of the soul, Irving is able to introduce the soteriological and specifically sanctificational dimension to his christology which facilitates a perceptual shift in the manner by which he understands incarnation. However, in order to understand best Irving's use of the soul, we return to the one who influenced him more than any other contemporary, Samuel Taylor Coleridge.<sup>172</sup>

#### 4.3. The Coleridgean Influence.

The influence of Coleridge upon Irving was a strong but distilled one, for Irving took nothing from Coleridge unless it would serve his own ends. What therefore was Coleridge's influence upon Irving? It was the strong

emphasis he placed upon Will in his understanding of the Divine. Coleridge's trinitarian stress on the priority of Will leads to two considerations. Firstly, it is that 'which supports Being:'<sup>173</sup> it is causative of all reality and therefore *in origine* causative of its own reality.<sup>174</sup> Secondly, it is *personal* Will, for, 'if ...personality, by which term I mean the source of personality, be necessarily contained in the idea of the perfect Will, how is it possible that personality should not be an essential attribute of this Will, contemplated as self, realized αὐτοῦτοῦτος?'<sup>175</sup>

As we have noted in Part I, whilst Coleridge identifies the Father as Absolute will, it is the Logos, the Alterity who solves the clash between Absolute and individual, creaturely will, for as one who is of both he is 'the everlasting middle term uniting the One God with created substance.'<sup>176</sup> Irving's understanding of the Son in terms of Will, which has been delineated in Part I of our study, parallels that of Coleridge. However, it is not this that concerns us. What is of importance here is the grounds Coleridge establishes to conceive of human personhood in terms of will. It is here we find grounds for arguing that Irving has been influenced by Coleridge, whilst moving sharply away from Coleridge's conclusions in order to establish a framework within which he may delineate the work of the Spirit in incarnation. In Coleridge's assertion that 'the essence of (human being) be will, and this will under a particular form'<sup>177</sup> we meet a means of solving the impasse presented to us in Irving's denial of a human person to Christ, for it is when Irving considers the *humanum* of Christ in relation to his human will that we confront a complementary picture of human nature which redresses the imbalance derived from stress upon the divinity of Christ.

In *Opus Maximum* Coleridge identifies the goal of human being in terms of 'the Will' that 'has to struggle upward into Free-Will' through 'freedom' that comes about when the will is 'One with the Will of God.'<sup>178</sup> Herein we confront his reaction both against mechanism,<sup>179</sup> and passivity.<sup>180</sup> However, he then adds, in parentheses, an astute and enlightening comment: freedom is 'found in centre of moral being which is received in struggling against bonds that prevent it'.<sup>181</sup> However, in reality it does



not live so, but rather lives in bondage to a 'nature under the mechanism of cause and effect'.<sup>182</sup> What is of interest here is the fact that whilst for Coleridge, the true dignity of human being is found in the struggle of the will to become self-determined, to live under the law of perfect freedom, it is Irving's concern to extend this to show that human will achieves this by means of the Spirit.

Coleridge presents human bondage as coming about by means of a power that determines the will: sin is lack of self-determination and, as such, lack of imaging the one who, as Absolute Will, is himself self-determining. Coleridge identifies sin, therefore like Irving, in terms of will, for the will is that which is the spiritual in human being. Sin is the act of a spirit against Spirit, a will against Will. Sin lies at the very essence of human bondage: it is bondage of the will. When, in turn, we combine Coleridge's notion of person-as-will to the notion of telos-in-freedom, we gain insight into his understanding of the significance of Christ, for Christ is the one whose will is in perfect relation to the Law of God, and therefore rendered sinless.

The question to be asked here is whether Coleridge identifies 'will' with 'person'. If he does, then he stands opposed not only to Irving, but with the orthodoxy to which he clung in response to his unitarian past, for to equate will with person within a duothelite christology is to attribute two 'persons' to the Saviour. If Coleridge, however, does not do this, then perhaps he offers a helpful clue to Irving's use of the soul of Christ.

On the one hand, Coleridge appears to be quite straightforward about his answer: the will is 'that will which is the true and only strict synonyme of the word, I, or the intelligent Self'.<sup>183</sup> Yet, on the other hand, he is less explicit elsewhere, preferring to refer to the will in man as 'the condition of his personality; the grounds and condition of the attribute which constitutes him man'.<sup>184</sup> This second use appears to be nearer to what Coleridge means by 'will.' Accordingly it is our contention, firstly, that Coleridge understands the relation of the will to the human 'person' not in the former sense, as agent, but in the latter, as medium. The will is the medium by which we are human. It is that which is wielded by the



agent, not the agent itself. It is, therefore, an ontological interpretation of personhood. Subsequently, Coleridge understands the relation between person and will in a similar manner to that of Irving, when the latter asserts that 'the personality standeth in the will'.<sup>185</sup> For both, the personality *resides* in the will.

Secondly, however, we meet a point of considerable hamartiological significance. Both agree that original sin does not stand in the nature: Irving attributes it to the person, Coleridge to the 'self originated corrupt nature of the will', to an *origin* in the will whereby *all* sin is *original* sin.<sup>186</sup> Both agree that original sin is the *sine qua non* of actual sin. Where they differ is their interpretative perspective: for Coleridge, it is the originating *location*; for Irving, it is the originating *agent*.

The reason for this difference stems from the opposing presuppositions each holds regarding the God's relation to the unholy, for when we turn to consider the qualitative nature of the will assumed in incarnation, we confront a difference of interpretation. Irving understands the will to be one that is in bondage and in solidarity with fallen humanity for the Saviour assumes a soul that is *τρέπτος*. For Coleridge this is an impossible interpretation of the humanity of Christ who assumes a soul that is *ἄτρέπτος*. Coleridge, like the later Jung, would not allow that God can dwell in a sick soul. Where Coleridge and Irving diverge in thought, therefore, is in their different interpretations of the *humanum* of Christ. Coleridge opposes Irving's notion that human being is fallen in nature. We realise how significant the difference is between them in this when we consider Coleridge's reaction to Irving's stress on the fallen *humanum* of Christ. In the personal copy of *Sermons, Lectures and Occasional Lectures*, gifted to Coleridge by Irving,<sup>187</sup> we find an enlightening comment made by Coleridge, when he writes that it is a "startling assertion" to say "that only by the constant Action of Omnipotence exerted by the H-Ghost was Christ himself able to fulfill the Law in the Flesh!"<sup>188</sup> In this Irving reflects more a Puritan influence than a Coleridgean, for it is in his insistence that the Spirit is the one who operates directly on the humanity of Christ that Irving concords with an *ordo salutans* more in



harmony with that outlined by the Puritan John Owen, than by the more modern Coleridge.<sup>189</sup>

What then can we identify as Coleridge's influence upon Irving? It must be, surely, that from Coleridge Irving derived a clear and intelligent ontology of will that enabled him firstly, to delineate the dynamics of salvation in terms of will, and secondly, to locate the pneumatic dimension to incarnation and redemption within the dynamics of will. From Coleridge, therefore, is Irving furnished with an understanding of spirit that enables him to develop a thoroughgoing trinitarian ontology, for he is given the means by which he may intelligently expound the person, place and meaning of the Spirit in incarnation. The essential identity of the Spirit within the divine relations, if we may summarise Coleridge, is that Spirit empowers Alterity in its relation to Will and creation. For Irving, the Spirit is the one who communicates and effects the Father's will to the Son. The economic identity of the Spirit within incarnation is one wherein the Spirit establishes the humanity of the incarnate Son, upholds his human will against that which is the common oppressor of humankind, and through the risen and glorified God-man establishes a new dimension to human being. It is therefore to this, the most central and important notion of Irving's christology that we now turn.

#### 4.4. The Wills: Divine and Human.

The intimate union Irving establishes between redemption and incarnation in terms of will enables him to bring content to the 'logical space' which is opened up in the relation between the Son and the Spirit in incarnation. Again, as one unsatisfied by mere affirmation, he seeks understanding to that which he holds in faith. Subsequently, he explores a possible manner by which we may bring together the insistence of two wills in the one agent of incarnation: the divine and the human. As we turn to consider Irving's exposition regarding the relation between the two, little will be said about the divine will. This has been discussed in detail in Part I. It is with the human will of Christ that we concern ourselves, and for three reasons. Firstly, Irving's theology of will emerges from within an *incarnational* context where the major concern is to show how the work of



salvation can be meaningfully trusted. Secondly, it is by means of the human will of Christ that we gain a clearer insight into Irving's understanding of the humanity of the Saviour. Thirdly, in his interpretation of incarnation, the relation between the human and divine wills is the fulcrum upon which the trinitarian agency of incarnation rests. It is with the former, however, that we concern ourselves at this stage of our discussion.

Irving understood well the implication of over-stressing the divine nature of the Son in incarnation: it precludes the work of the Spirit - the human is subordinated to the divine. It is perhaps here that we gain a sense of perspective regarding the historical position Irving holds, for whilst the modern christological debate has tended to subordinate the divine to the human, we find the opposite concern with Irving: his is the concern to safeguard the divine in its relation to the human in incarnation. Nevertheless, he does not fall into the abyss of 'monothematicism' wherein the human is lost to the divine. Nor does he fall into the abyss of severe 'kenoticism' wherein the divine is lost to the human. Rather, by means of his understanding of the centrality of the human will in its relation to that of the divine, Irving attempts to establish a means of avoiding either danger.

How does Irving go about this? It is our contention that as we turn to consider the place Irving attributes the human will in incarnation that we gain access to his understanding of the *humanum* in incarnation, for it is here that we confront his seminal thoughts on the place of faith in the life of the incarnate Son.

He, the person of the Son of God, acting faith upon his Father through those temptations and limitations of sinful flesh, and receiving from the Father, the Holy Ghost, in answer to his prayer, did inform his human nature with such strength, light, life, and sanctity, as to overcome with its weakness and penury the utmost might of the devil.<sup>190</sup>

This element of faith on the part of Christ is identified as 'seminal' on Irving's part for two reasons. Firstly, although it does not appear explicitly at all points of his thinking it holds an important place in his



argument. Secondly, it is possible that in this area of his thought he was influenced by the thinking of his compatriot, Thomas Erskine of Linlathen.<sup>191</sup> Nevertheless, whilst this may be a latent development in his thought, it is far from one that is undeveloped, for it must be stressed that it undergirds his entire understanding of the humanity of Christ.

Herein we are able to move towards our goal of bringing together the several strands of thought in Irving's christology. If the Son in and of himself is unable to sanctify the fallen human nature into which he is incarnated, it is both due to the fact that in his divine nature he requires no sanctification and that it is not his personal function to sanctify. Rather, it is the human nature that is in need of sanctification, and hence empowering by the Spirit. The locus of sanctification is clearly established within *human* parameters. Underlying Irving's christology is his belief that whilst the Father's will is accomplished by the Son through the Spirit, the dynamic by which this occurs is not bare divine power, but through the faith of the God-man. In his human existence that the Son exercises faith in the Father, and in so doing, receives the Spirit of holiness for sanctification. Thus, underlying Irving's entire christology is a stress on the *faith* of Christ as a *human being* upon the Father in order to accomplish the Father's will.

Though the flesh, the devil, and the world, seek to bring the soul into captivity of sin, he through the soul, apprehending by faith the help of the holy Spirit, did resist the devil and the world, and the mortal corruptible flesh, and devote all the members of his body to the service of the living God.<sup>192</sup>

What is significant about this passage for our thesis is the way in which it enables us to see why Irving combines this stress on the soul of Christ with an equally emphatic stress on the place of the will in incarnation, for he immediately goes on to argue that:

the great combat is for the body, because the body is that which brings the soul to light. Man is made on very purpose to bring the invisible God to light, to be his image and his likeness, through which he may be seen and known in his working over the creation. Now God, being a Spirit, carrieth on his communication only through the Spirit or word, and not otherwise. There his operation as God beginneth and endeth. He leaves the will of man to do the rest. For he would have the will of man to be



recognised as the lord of all visible things. By and through the will of man, he would use the body of man to express..what is the image and purpose of the divine mind, with respect to things created and made.<sup>193</sup>

Herein Irving identifies the human will as both the *locus* and *modus operans* of redemption. It is the *locus* in that it is from the will that human action, purpose, desire for knowledge and exertion of power are originated. But it is a will which in its natural state is in 'a condition of bondage, not willingly obedient,' one from which it is unable 'to extricate itself into the obedience of God and the desire of everlasting good'.<sup>194</sup> It is *locus* in that in its fallen state it is 'loaded with a thousand oppressions, and not capable of being extricated but by the omnipotent will of the Father'.<sup>195</sup> However, it is also the *modus* by which redemption is procured, for as Irving argues above, the will, as that which reflects the divine image, must be liberated from the power of sin in the flesh.<sup>196</sup> Therefore is it this humanity which Christ 'found all sullied and vile, and by *His use of the Holy Ghost*, did restore to its original excellence'.<sup>197</sup>

How does this preliminary discussion of Irving's use of the human will of the incarnate Son Christ help to counteract the earlier Apollinarian criticism? That Irving denies there to be any human person is beyond question. It has been the contention of this thesis that Irving's intention in so arguing has been to safeguard both the status and sinlessness of divine agent in incarnation. Such an intention comes to the fore in Irving's christology whenever he stresses the divine status of Christ. It is a consequence of a thoroughly incarnational christology. However, such a perspective is only part of Irving's christology, for alongside this stress on the divine, there is an equally strong insistence on the humanity of the Saviour, a humanity so completely in solidarity with that in need of redemption that Irving identifies it as 'fallen human nature', and in so doing placed himself under the scrutiny of less enlightened contemporaries. Yet it could be argued still that Irving remains firmly within an Alexandrian-type christology. However, as we turn to consider his understanding of the human will of the Son, firstly in light of the influence Coleridge had upon Irving, and then in light of his



own appreciation of what the incarnate Son must do as human being in order to become the Saviour, we confront a humanity that lacks no human detail. In his thoroughly sanctificational christology, Irving presents a Christ that is fully human. Before considering the manner by which he unites both perspectives, we shall permit Irving to have the last word on his own understanding about the relation between the divine and human wills of Christ.

The orthodox doctrine is, that there were two wills in Christ; the one the absolute will of the Godhead, which went on working in its infinite circles, the other a man's will, which was bounded by the limited knowledge..desires..affections..actions of manhood; a Divine nature, and a human nature, God and man. The doctrine holdeth..that from the incarnation onwards, and for ever, the Son of God never thought, felt, or acted, but by condescending out of the infinitude of the Divine will, into the finiteness of the human will; in which condescension, the self-sacrifice..humiliation..grace, and goodness of the Godhead are revealed: without which condescension these attributes of the Godhead could never have been known unto the creatures. This condescension it is which giveth an infinite value to every act of Christ, - in the Father's sight, inasmuch as it makes Him known, and obtains His great purpose of self-manifestation: - in the creature's sight, inasmuch as it shews unto the creature the great freewill condescension of the Son, by which the Son is made known, and the Holy Spirit communicated.<sup>198</sup>

#### 4.5. The Son of Man: the Mediator.

It is when Irving turns to consider the specific identity of the agent of incarnation that he furnishes us with a fuller understanding of the *humanum* of incarnation than we have hitherto noted. The one who saves is he who is fully God and fully human. In the specific identity as the God-man do we meet the divine Son who has become man for us and our salvation: one whom Irving identifies in the following manner:

It is necessary to observe, that Christ, although not a human person, ever acteth as a human person, under the condition of a human person, within that defined sphere of creature being; and this is the meaning of His name, the Son of Man. But while thus acting within bounds, He ceaseth not to be the Son of God.<sup>199</sup>



What interests us now as we turn to consider his complementary understanding of agency in incarnation, namely, that which establishes the *humanum* of incarnation, is the question whether Irving manages to maintain the full humanity of Christ. It is our contention that not only does Irving do so, but that he accomplishes this by extending his christology to incorporate the person and work of the Spirit.

Thus we are introduced to Irving's understanding of Christ as the Son of Man, an identity Irving is careful always to subordinate to that of Son of God, for the actings of the Son of God end where those of the Son of Man begin, and it is the Son of Man who suffers and acts as one filled with the Spirit.<sup>200</sup> This important qualification hints at Irving's christological concern. The Son, as agent of incarnation, acts within the limitations of human personhood. Herein we are closest to an explicit delineation regarding the human identity of Christ. Yet it is an approach grounded firmly within an ontological setting. There is a sense of integrity in this method: Irving's concern is to establish assurance of salvation. This he attempts from a purely theological perspective: salvation, whilst effected within the realm of the human, comes about by the agency of the trinitarian God alone. It is hardly surprising, then, that Irving does not approach the question of identity regarding the one who saves from the human perspective. It is not a *man* who saves. It is the *Son of man*. Yet, it is as the person of Son of God that the 'personality of the Son of Man' is sustained.<sup>201</sup> It is the incarnate Son of God. Herein we are able to declare fully Irving's understanding of the agent of incarnation.

The person, the *I* who speaketh, acteth, suffereth in Christ, is not the Divine nature, nor it it the human nature, alone; but it is the Divine nature having passed into the human nature, and therein effecting its will and purpose of acting or of suffering.<sup>202</sup>

But by what means does this come about? It is as the God-Man, the Mediator. Irving makes central that which Kierkegaard puts so succinctly, that 'man needs a mediator in order to come to God.'<sup>203</sup> Nowhere do we confront the soteriological dilemma of the Christian proclamation of 'Good News' more clearly than at this point. For at the heart of the Christian



Gospel lies a dual affirmation. From the purely divine perspective, there is the gulf brought about by human sin: the holiness of Divine Being precludes turning a blind-eye to sin. Consequently, the reality and offence of human sin before God, whose own being is the criterion for holiness, has to be confronted and overcome before reconciliation between human and divine being can occur. For Irving, the divine response in incarnation reveals both the trinitarian being of God and the love of the Father as he meets this response of his own character through his Son. Herein is the purely incarnational dimension to Irving's christology, yet one which involves an essentially pneumatic dimension in light of the fact that, for Irving, the Son can do nothing of the Father's will without the Spirit.

If this is that which we may identify as the purely divine perspective of the kerygma, what is the human? This Irving identifies in terms of the human plight of bondage to sin. An adequate doctrine of salvation must not only make reparation over the divine response to sin and the sinner. It must also be seen to have dealt with this 'power sphere'. Herein lies the reason for Irving's insistence on coupling the soul of Christ within the context of a fallen humanity. The humility, love and grace of God is revealed in the Son's willingness not only to become one with that which requires release, but to effect redemption on *human* terms. Herein is the purely sanctificational dimension to Irving's christology.

How do the divine and the human; the holy and the unholy; the infinite and the finite; the Creator and created meet? For Irving, the answer lies in our understanding of Christ as Mediator and Surety. It is in the person of the one Mediator that Godhead and creature meet; it is as Surety that the relation between the two is identified, for Jesus Christ is 'the surety of a better testament (Heb.7:22). As Surety, Christ is the Godward assurance that God will 'fulfill his testament' and the manward assurance that the debt has been paid, becoming our bondsman or bailman.<sup>204</sup> The Godward and humanward aspects of salvation are united in the Mediator who comes in the 'very condition' of the offended persons' and in the 'very condition' of the 'offending persons'.<sup>205</sup>



The Son carries out the functions of Mediatorship and Suretyship not in his divine nature, but in his human nature, as Son of Man. Why? 'Because his divine nature is unchangeable and all insufficient.'<sup>206</sup> As Brunner points out, it is as Mediator that the Son makes himself 'one with humanity in its sin and sorrow.' In so doing, the incarnation is seen to be no 'mere gesture; it is reality, stark and painful. Jesus drinks the cup of human existence in all its alienation from God, to the very dregs.'<sup>207</sup> What is so significant about Irving's christology is the fact the manner by which he argues that the Son does so only in and through the power and strength of the Spirit.

Irving's christological intention is to get behind the status of Mediator to the very dynamics of Mediatorship. As Brunner points out, Christ's 'being' as Mediator cannot be divorced from his 'work' as Mediator, 'for this Person is not static but dynamic.'<sup>208</sup> This comment serves as the fulcrum by which we may fully understand Irving's intention in uniting his doctrine of God as Trinity so intimately with his doctrine of Christ.

We have noted already Irving's concern to establish the solidarity of the Saviour with that in need of forgiveness and restoration. This he finds in the *humanum* assumed in incarnation. As a consequence we have noted also that Irving's is hardly a soteriology by imputation. Rather is it one of identification. Yet it is an identification by means of mediation. Through the act of incarnation is mediation made possible. This is the theological paradigm within which Irving operates. It is a thoroughgoing *incarnational* paradigm. Whatever we may wish to say about the place Irving attributes the person and work of the Spirit, his christology is essentially incarnational. What constitutes a change within this paradigm, however, is the perceptual shift brought about by his appreciation of the Spirit in his relation to incarnation. Although mediation between God and human being is accomplished in the event of incarnation, a mediation whereby the Mediator brings humanity and in particular, human will, out of the aeonic power sphere in which it finds itself in bondage and brings it holy and obedient, as Second Adam, to the Father, it is by means of his perception of the Spirit's relations both essential and economic, that Irving's christology is worthy of our consideration.



How then does Brunner's comment above aid our argument? On the one hand Irving safeguards the premis that it is only God who saves, by his stress on the Son's divine identity in incarnation. Alternatively, Irving safeguards the equally important maxim, that only that which is assumed is healed, by means of the Son's *humanum* in incarnation. Both christological criteria are united in the Spirit's relation to the Son not simply by virtue of the essentially trinitarian relations by which Irving attempts to make sense of the biblical and formulary data, but more importantly, in the manner by which he perceives that his christology will be efficient only to the degree that it is able to offer a meaningful and assuring 'redemptive package'. For Irving, this entails the assurance of what he identifies as 'holiness in the flesh': an assurance that what God requires of the believer is possible by virtue of the fact that it has been achieved by Christ under the same conditions as those in which each Christian exists.

Through refusing to divorce his christology from his soteriology, of refusing to separate the person of Christ from the person requiring salvation, Irving expands the christological tradition he has inherited to incorporate a means of delineating the pneumatic dimension inherent to any trinitarian christology. In turn, his understanding of the dynamics of sin enable him to insist upon a priority of wills in incarnation: of the Divine will expressed in the Son's obedience to the Father through the Spirit and of the human will expressed in the mediation of the incarnate Son as Son of Man through the power of the Spirit to uphold the human will within the limitations of human personhood, and present it holy before the Father.

By means of his essentially pneumatic perception of Filial incarnation, Irving avoids appropriating the 'being' of the Mediator to the Son as God, and the 'work' of the Mediator to the Son human being. Such an interpretation of Irving's christology would be to miss the entire thrust of his trinitarian understanding of incarnation. It is, rather, that the latter, the work, depends on the former, the being, in and through the empowering of the Spirit, both in terms of the nature of *his* being and his work.



What is meant by this? Simply, that Part I shows Irving's doctrine of God to be a thoroughly trinitarian interpretation of divine being in which the Son performs the Father's will always in and through his relation to the Spirit. In addition, Part II shows Irving's doctrine of human being to consist of a pneumatic dimension: human being becomes that which the Creator desires only in and through its dependence upon and relation to the Spirit. Part III highlights the manner by which Irving understands the intention of salvation to be attained: through the medium of fallen and rebellious humanity. Irving unites these separate issues through his understanding of the Mediator, the Son of Man. As Mediator, the Son continues to act in dependence upon the Spirit in order to bring about the Father's plan of salvation, for, 'in the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his godly fear. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and being made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek, (Hebrews 5:7-10).

As Mediator, the Son brings together in harmony and without default, both subjects in the event of mediation: a holy God and a rebellious creature. This is the Filial *nobile officium* of incarnation. However, as Mediator, the Son depends upon the Spirit in order to uphold the rebel and fallen human will. This is the great comfort and assurance of salvation that Irving seeks to establish, for since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, we hold fast our confession. We have not a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Therefore we draw near to the throne of grace with confidence, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need, (Hebrews 4:14-16).

As a result, Christ can become Mediator for that which requires mediation, fallen human being, in a *general* sense that he assumes the general state of human being. He is one in solidarity with that which requires redemption. In his resurrection he is shown to be the Proto-type of a new



humanity, and the Guarantor of its final outcome, for in redemption we receive the Spirit of the one who himself has overcome sin in the flesh and death. Alternatively, Christ is Mediator in the *specific* sense in that he assumes a specific human will which, within the limitations of fallen human nature, is seen to overcome the rebel nature and present itself unblemished to a holy God.

In this manner Irving safeguards the humanity of incarnation. When he deals with that which is in need of salvation, as opposed to the one who accomplishes it, he stresses the full humanity of Christ, doing so within an ontological interpretation of personhood. It is our contention that this priority is meaningful only within an ontological understanding of personhood, wherein the notion of person is not reduced to psychological categories. In Irving's christology, the agent of incarnation is the Son as he limits himself to the form of Mediator, as the Son of Man: generally in terms of fallen human nature; specifically in terms of his human will which overcomes the general state of incarnation, fallen humanity, through the enabling agency of the Spirit. It is a human limitation expressed in terms of will in that the act of salvation has to do with the very essence of human being, of a will in bondage both to the law of fallen nature and to the spirit of the age.

Herein we confront the two intimately combined double thrusts Irving uses to describe the Saviour's humanity: he attributes the *general* state of human nature in its fallen state, the 'power sphere' in which all humanity finds itself enslaved, to the Saviour *qua* Son of God; he attributes the *specific* state of human being, as a will in bondage to this aeonic power, to the Saviour *qua* Son of Man, as Mediator. In light of this first double thrust we may identify Irving's pneumatological concern in relation to his understanding of Christ as Mediator in two ways: the purely pneumatic and the sanctificational. The first Irving appropriates to the Son *qua* God by virtue of the essentially trinitarian nature of his doctrine of God: the Son in his essential relation to the Father exists as one in relation through the Spirit. It is God who mediates between himself and human being: the trinitarian God in his becoming incarnate. Herein Irving



safeguards the divine agency of mediation: God in his being as Son comes to us in incarnation in order to reconcile us to himself.

The second belongs to the Son *qua* man, as one who in his economic relation with *fallen* humanity, relies on the Spirit to perform the Father's will and overcome 'sin in the flesh,' so proving himself to be Saviour and Lord not in the display of brute divine power, but in humility. Herein, Irving safeguards the human dimension of that which is in need of mediation: the Son becomes that which is alienated from God and in need of a mediator in order that it may become that which its creator intends.

How then does Irving's understanding of the dynamics of incarnation facilitate a change in the paradigm by which God's action in Christ has been interpreted? It is in his understanding of the Son in his relation as Mediator to the Spirit in incarnation, a relation both *qua* God and *qua* human being. By means of this dynamic pneumatic dimension to his christology Irving redresses the imbalance he has introduced in his christology by his Alexandrian stress on the divine agent of the Son in incarnation. What is so significant about this in light of the history of christological interpretation is the fact that Irving uses an Antiochene-type christology, with its stress on the human identity of the Saviour and his reliance upon the Spirit, to do this. In so doing, he brings content to the forced 'logical space' brought about by the particular way in which the history of christological interpretation has developed.

He took unto Himself a true body and a reasonable soul. He did not take these that they might lie beside Him unoccupied, or that they might be used now and then as it pleased Him...He is one person, the person of the Son of God, and every act of that person must include both natures, but never in either nature be perfected. If He did act in the Divine nature anything without the human nature, then there is a person standing in the Divine nature alone; for that which is distinctive of a person is a complete action, feeling, or word. If, again, He did any act in the human nature alone, where is the divine?...God gave this revelation to Jesus Christ, who in becoming man truly came into limitation of the knowledge, feelings, and complete nature of man; self-contracted, self-humbled, self-emptied of His glory, that He might show His love to human nature in its lowest forms, and redeem it out of its most miserable conditions...That human reason which He took, He did inform with His personality of the eternal Word; and receiving the Holy Ghost from the Father, in



answer to His faith, He did instruct and support the human nature through all the stages of its existence, which was upholden wise, faithful, and true, through the influence of the Holy Ghost. And thus every action begun in the Godhead of the Son of man, proceeded into the manhood, and out of the manhood passed complete.<sup>209</sup>

#### 4.6. Conclusion.

What, then, may we conclude regarding Irving's christology? There is no doubt about the efficacy of Strachan's perceptive statement that Irving's christological position appears 'to be unique and deserves the attention which it has so far not received'.<sup>210</sup> In our discussion of Irving's doctrines of God and human being, we have seen that the means by which Irving achieves this christological uniqueness are themselves far from ordinary and well-run expressions of his theological tradition. Rather, although they cannot be deemed totally *unique*, they do represent a significant development of elements within his theological tradition that have lain undeveloped and are themselves worthy of further attention. We have been able to show how, by virtue of these developments, Irving's christology is one that we may deem *efficient*, by which is meant simply that it shows a meaningful and adequate sense of continuity in the relation between the object of incarnation, namely, human being in its need of salvation, and the subject of incarnation, namely, the God who saves. That which is central to his overall concern at all times remains the person of Christ in the work of salvation. What makes his christology so unique is the place he accords the Spirit therein, a pneumatological dimension to his christology which is achieved and maintained because of its consistent continuity with his understanding of the being of God, as Trinity, and with human being as it becomes that which its Creator desires by virtue of the Spirit who comes to us in and through Christ. In this sense, Irving establishes a theological continuity by virtue of his understanding of the Spirit.

However, whilst Irving may agree with the sentiments expressed by Hook, that "any satisfactory doctrine of God depend(s) on a satisfactory



Christology," and that the means by which we may attain such satisfaction lies in our relatively undeveloped understanding of the Spirit, Irving is seen to diverge significantly from the modern answer incorporated in that which may be identified as a *Spirit christology*.<sup>211</sup> For the latter takes as its starting point the belief that "our present official Christology, and doctrine of the Trinity which is built upon it, is not only expressed in the language of a philosophy which is outmoded and long since discredited, but also in one which no longer serves the interests of vital religion".<sup>212</sup>

Whilst the blame for this criticism lies squarely with the way in which our doctrines of God and Christ have been developed in a 'monothematic' manner<sup>213</sup> with little reference to the trinitarian nature of incarnation and its relation to human being or to the Spirit, the importance of Irving's christology lies in the fact that his solution does not involve a divorce from the 'official' doctrine of God as Trinity,<sup>214</sup> but, rather, in its development in light of his understanding of both the incarnation and the nature of salvation. Indeed, Irving may be understood as complementing his christology by a "'search for the historical Spirit."<sup>215</sup> Our survey of the manner by which Irving expands his understanding of the doctrines of God and human being in light of incarnation show he is not guilty of Bobrinskoy's double criticism of scholastic pneumatology which on the one hand has reduced the doctrine of the Spirit 'to a single specific chapter of trinitarian theology' focusing either in the eternal procession of the Spirit from the Father, or from the Father and the Son,' and on the other, limits 'its account of the function of the Spirit to a consideration of his gifts within the Church and his sanctifying activity in the spiritual life of the individual believers.'<sup>216</sup>

We meet, rather, in Irving's christology a method wherein 'the character of the Spirit has taken its 'shape' from the impress of Jesus' own relationship with God.'<sup>217</sup> Implicit in this christological and pneumatological method is the need to identify what we understand this relationship to be: it demands an elucidation of both divine and human being. For Irving, this involves an exploration of the 'fundamental "interconnectedness" between Christology and Pneumatology.'<sup>218</sup> To do so Irving presents a meaningful manner by which the inexpressible being of



God may be expressed as a being which 'remains a being *which is coming*.'<sup>219</sup> However, for Irving there is no suggestion that God is an incomplete being. God's being is not a processional being. Rather, by shunning the temptation to develop his christology and pneumatology separately, and by bringing them together and talking in a 'unitary language about the one, indivisible God who saves',<sup>220</sup> through incarnation and inspiration, Irving establishes a means of continuity between his understanding of the affective and effective dynamics of salvation: of the human need of salvation and the divine gift of salvation. By means of his understanding of the place of the Spirit in incarnation Irving 'acknowledges that God's humanity as a story *which has happened* does not cease being history *which is happening now*,'<sup>221</sup> for the Spirit we receive in redemption is the same Spirit who annointed, empowered and raised the God-man, Jesus Christ.

It is to Irving's credit that the means by which he has sought to do this, namely, the manner in which he has developed his appreciation of the being of God and human being, has itself avoided two fundamental pitfalls. Firstly, of *pneumatological minimalism* wherein the place of the Spirit is relegated, at best, to an assumed but uninvolved place in incarnation, and, at worst, completely ignored.<sup>222</sup> Herein we discuss *trinitarian* interpretations of incarnation where there is no doubting the being or divinity of the Spirit; only that little space is made for the place of the Spirit. Consequently, little thought, if any, is given to considering the status of the Spirit in incarnation. This, by and large, was the context within which Irving found himself: a context unable to develop fully the Spirit's status in relation to the incarnate Son; whether it be as Irving believed, both *onto-relational* - an aspect of the nature and character of the Triune God, and *onto-functional* - consequential to the divine concerns of salvation, or as Schleiermacher believed, *functional* - consequential to *human* concerns inherent to salvation.

Secondly, Irving avoids the pitfall of what Florovsky calls, 'anthropological maximalism',<sup>223</sup> wherein Christ becomes the 'simple receptacle of the Spirit, thereby obscuring the truth that the Savior is above all the 'royal dwelling-place', the living and unique *locus* of the full presence of the

Spirit, who belongs to him alone.'<sup>224</sup> Irving's is no *Spirit christology*. The agent of incarnation is no mere inspired man, but at all times the divine Son. Where Irving advances our appreciation of the being of God in incarnation, is in the manner by which he intimately identifies the Saviour with that which requires salvation. In so doing, he initiates a paradigm shift which opens up a logical space wherein a more efficient interpretation of incarnation in its relation to salvation is initiated. It has been the desire of this thesis to expand more clearly the means by which Irving achieves this through his understanding of the person and work of the Spirit in incarnation and the being of God: as 'that which realizes in the endless diversity of human lives the set of renewed human possibilities opened up by the work of Christ.'<sup>225</sup>



## 5. FOOTNOTES.

### Introduction.

1. T. Merton: The Seven Storey Mountain. London: Sheldon Press, 1975, p83.
2. R.F. Thiemann: Revelation and Theology. The Gospel as Narrated Promise. Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985, p69.
3. W.A. Andrews: "Edward Irving: A Review." The New Englander, (July-Oct., 1863), Edinburgh: Thomas Laurie, 1864, pp41-45.
4. T.V. Morris: The Logic of God Incarnate. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986, p64.
5. G. Kaufman: Systematic Theology: A Historical Perspective. New York: Scribner's, 1968, ppx.
6. K. Surin: The Turnings of Darkness and Light. Essays in Philosophical and Systematic Theology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, p29.
7. C.D. Batson: Commitment Without Ideology. Eds. C.D. Batson, J.C. Baker, W.M. Clark, London: SCM Press Ltd, 1973, p25.
8. T.S. Kuhn: The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962, p61, 84ff, 109.
9. See Surin, fn38, Part I. See also, R. Williams, Blackfriars, Vol.70. 824, p87;

To quarry Augustine or Calvin for arguments on specific topics, while amputating the historical and polemical setting of those arguments, is to risk a bland homogenisation of the past.

10. This is a more damning criticism in light of the fact that these two doctrines undergird Irving's entire christology. With regards the initial controversy that arose around Irving's teaching, this is as an illuminating insight into the manner by which presuppositions inherent in theological debate can work to blur the central meaning of a theologian's work. With regards, however, to subsequent Irving research these doctrines have remained relatively undiscussed, and their relation to his christology unaddressed. For instance, P.E. Davies, in his 1928 Edinburgh thesis, 'An Examination of the Views of Edward Irving Concerning the Person and Work of Jesus Christ.' assigns under 5 pages to Irving's anthropology. The aim of I.J. Nantomah, in his Aberdeen 1982 thesis, 'Jesus the God-Man: the Doctrine of the Incarnation in Edward Irving in the light of the Teaching of the Church Fathers and its relevance for a Twentieth century African Context', precludes any detailed interaction with

either doctrines, and whilst D.D. Dorries' erudite Aberdeen 1987 thesis, Nineteenth Century British Christological Controversy, Centring Upon Edward Irving's Doctrine of Christ's Human Nature, may be understood as an expansion of the former part of Nantomah's less well developed thesis, his argument, too, has little recourse for developing independently, Irving's doctrines of God and human being. C.G. Strachan, in the publication of his 1973 Edinburgh thesis, The Pentecostal Teaching of Edward Irving, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1973), gives a more explicit presentation of Irving's doctrine of God as Trinity, but here Strahan's interest lies with the trinitarian understanding of the person and work of Christ in relation to the Pentecostal notion of 'baptism with the Holy Spirit'.

11. A.E. McGrath: The Making of Modern German Christology. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1986, pp17-18.
12. R.R. Williams: Schleiermacher the Theologian. The Construction of the Doctrine of God. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978, p143.
13. *ibid*: 5.
14. E. TeSelle: Christ in Conflict. Divine Purpose and Human Possibility. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975, p48.
15. F.D. Schleiermacher: The Christian Faith. E. Tr of second edition by H.R. Mackintosh and J.S. Stewart, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986, §4.1, p13. (Henceforth, CF).
16. CF §4.2, p13.
17. CF §4.3, pp16-17.
18. "The feeling of absolute dependence becomes a clear self-consciousness only as this idea comes simultaneously into being." CF §4.4.17.
19. CF §94.2, p387.
20. CF 95, p389.
21. CF 94.4, p411.
22. The charge of anthropocentrism however, is a valid one, for whilst the person of Christ as Archetype is at all times the criterion by which all human self-consciousness is interpreted, it is so via human self-consciousness.
23. Lecture 13 (June 4, 1832), in K.W. Clements: Friedrich Schleiermacher Pioneer of Modern Theology. London: Collins, 1987, pp204-205.
24. CF §89.3, p368.
25. *ibid*.



26. CF §94.3, p389.
27. CF §89.2, p367.
28. CF 13.1, p63.
29. CF 97.4, p411.
30. J.C. Verheyden: The Life of Schleiermacher. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975, p~~x~~lviii.
31. CF §170, p738.
32. CF §170.1, p739.
33. CF §170.2, p739.
34. CF §170.3, p741.
35. CF §171.4, pp745-746.
36. CF §95.1, p390.
37. CF §172, p747.
38. CF §172.2, p748.
39. F. Schleiermacher: "On the Discrepancies between the Sabellian and Athanasian Method of Representing the Doctrine of the Trinity," in The Biblical Repository and Quarterly Observer, No XVIII, April, 1835, pp339-353, No XIX, July, 1835, pp1-80, Andover: Gould and Newman, 1835. (Henceforth, BRQO).
40. BRQO (XIX), p52.
41. BRQO (XIX), p61.
42. BRQO (XIX), p70.
43. CF §116.3, p535.
44. CF §124.1, p575.
45. CF §121.1, p563.
46. The Church experiences a greater portion of the Spirit than did Christ, CF §122.2, p567; §124.2, p577; BRQO p59.
47. BRQO (XIX), pp1-80.
48. CF §116.3, p534.
49. CF §93.4, p382-383.

50. See Clements, op cit, p33, for Schleiermacher's devotion to preaching the Gospel
51. CW.V:43, 77, 85.
52. CW.V:56.
53. CW.V:12.
54. This theme of grace permeates Irving's entire theology. The following two quotations show how its relation to the content of Parts I and II respectively.

Grace is not an attribute of God, like wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth: but a form of the will of God, where of all those are but the attributes or characteristics. As the will to create was waited on and carried into effect by all those attendant attributes, so also was the will to save. The act of grace is, therefore, like the act of creation, and hath its similitude in nothing else. It is another mood..in the Divine mind; another act in the great mystery of manifesting Himself. Grace, therefore, is not mercy, but mercy is to be seen in grace..and so of every other attribute of the Godhead. It is a new act of the Divine will, in which all the features of the Divinity will manifest themselves.CW.V:315

Sin..is a pre-requisite to grace; and only a sinner can be the subject of grace: others may know goodness; but sinners alone can know grace. CW.V:312.

55. C.E. Gunton: Yesterday and Today: A Study of Continuities in Christology. London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983, 173.
56. CW.V:286.
57. J.K. Mozley, "Christology and Soteriology," in, Mysterium Christi. Christological Studies by British and German Theologians. Eds. G.K.A. Bell, A. Deissmann, London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1930, p171.
58. CW.V:30.
59. CHF:v1.
60. D.W. Dorries, op cit fn 10.
61. CW.V:29, also 43.
62. P. Pokorný: The Genesis of Christology, trans. M. Lefébure, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1987, p61.
63. PW1:188-189.
64. CW.V:422.



65. G.W. Bromily: "The Spirit of Christ," in Essays in Christology for Karl Barth, pp133-152. London: Lutterworth Press, 1956, 135.
66. J. Moltmann: "The Unity of the Triune God," in St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly, 28,3, 1984, pp157-171, p162.
67. See in particular, C.G. Strachan: The Pentecostal Teaching of Edward Irving. London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1973.
68. E. McDonagh: "The Holy Spirit and Human Identity", in The Irish Theological Quarterly, 49.1, 1982, pp37--49, p42.
69. O. Cullmann: The Christology of the New Testament, London: SCM Press, 1957, p317.
70. C.F.D. Moule: "The Manhood of Jesus in the New Testament," in Christ, Faith and History. Cambridge Studies in Christology, pp95-110, Eds, S.W. Sykes, J.P. Clayton, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972, p110.
71. See fn 10 for research bibliography on Irving.
72. Moule, op cit, p110.
73. The most explicit being: K. Ware: The Humanity of Christ. The Fourth Constantinople Lecture. Anglican and Eastern Churches Association, 1985, and C.E. Gunton: "Two Dogmas Revisited: Edward Irving's Christology", Scottish Journal of Theology 41.3 (1988), pp359-376.
74. C.D. Batson, op cit, (fn 7), p125.
75. J. Meyendorff: "Christ's Humanity: the Paschal Mystery", St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly, 31.1, 1987, pp5-46, p24.
76. V.P. Brannick: "The Sinful Flesh of the Son of God (Rom 8:3): A Key Image of Pauline Theology," The Catholic Biblical Quarterly, 47, 1985, pp246-262, p260.
77. *ibid*, p251.
78. Ware: op cit, p4.
79. Gunton: op cit, SJT 41.3, p366, italics mine.
80. Meyendorff: op cit, p27: W. Pannenberg: Jesus - God and Man,



Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1968, p39, "Almost all Christological conceptions have had soteriological motifs. Changes in the soteriological interest, in man's understanding of salvation, explain, at least in part, the different forms Christology has taken at different times." P. Tillich: Systematic Theology, Vol.2, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957, p150, "Christology is a function of soteriology. The problem of soteriology creates the christological question and gives direction to the christological answer." Both quoted in P.W. Newman: A Spirit Christology, Lanham: University Press of America, 1987, p2. D.M. Baillie: God was in Christ, London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1973, p160, "Throughout the Christian tradition the supreme human exigency to which the doctrine of the Incarnation had to be related and made relevant has been the need of salvation from sin, the forgiveness of sins."

81. Surin: op cit, p122.

82. S.W. Sykes: "The Theology of the humanity of Christ", in Christ, Faith and History. Cambridge Studies in Christology, eds; S.W. Sykes, J.P. Clayton, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972, pp53-71, pp58-59. One who presents the tradition as it stands in stark contrast to that adopted by Irving was Julian of Halicarnassus who believed that Christ assumed an incorruptible, pre-fallen humanity which "was not only sinless but...had no involvement in the fallen state of the human race", V.C. Samuel, "One Incarnate Nature of God the Word", The Greek Orthodox Theological Review, Vol.X.2, 1964-1965. Of interest here is the response given by J.S. Romanides to Samuel's paper discussing the unorthodox position taken by Julian, one which typifies that interpretation of the *humanum* of Christ which Irving opposed most vehemently:

The teaching of Julian of Halicarnassus that the Logos united to Himself manhood as it was before the fall *is not in itself wrong* and is accepted by all Fathers. What is wrong with Julian's position..is that the human nature of Christ was considered incorruptible before the resurrection. I would add that most Fathers would rather say that the human nature of Christ was by nature mortal *but not by nature under the power or sentence of death and corruption which are the wages of sin*. In this sense even angels are by nature mortal. Only God is by nature immortal. It is for this reason that the death of the Lord of Glory in the flesh was voluntary and not the wages of personal or inherited sin. (ibid: 52, italics mine).

83. LHN 4-5.

84. LHN 6-7.

85. CW.V:244.

86. ibid.

87. CW.V:3



88. OCD 50-51.
89. CW.V:115, italics mine. Also PW.2:464-5; Scripture would have much more to say on the subject if Christ's humanity were of a completely different kind as to make him immune to temptation and sin.
- In The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord's Human Nature pp27-28, Irving identifies seven implications if Christ's flesh is not fallen:
1. He is not tempted in all points as we are.
  2. He cannot be our high priest.
  3. He only had to contend against two enemies; the devil and the world. Therefore we have no proof that he overcame the third, the flesh.
  4. As he was not one with humanity, humanity cannot be one with him.
  5. There is no evidence that the Spirit has wrestled with 'wicked flesh' and overcome it.
  6. As Christ's life is 'no proto-type' of the Spirit's power over sinful flesh, neither is his resurrection an assurance of our resurrection.
  7. The Gospel narratives are a misrepresentation of Christ, for they show him to be passive to temptation as are we.
90. This is the central argument to Dorries' thesis: both that Irving's understanding of this term stands well within the perimeters of orthodoxy and that the débâcle that followed misunderstood his use of the term.
91. "Irving...took care, as Nestorius had done, to distinguish between the levels of *nature* and *person*," Ware: op cit, pp6-7; Nantomah: op cit, pp136-137; E. Brunner: The Mediator. A Study of the Central Doctrine of the Christian Faith. London: The Lutterworth Press, 1934, p319.
92. L. Andrewes: Ninety-Six Sermons by the Right Honourable and Reverend Father in God, Lancelot Andrewes, Sometime Lord Bishop of Winchester. In 3 volumes. Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1891. Vol. 1, p89.
93. CW.V:218
94. CW.V:217.
95. Ch.viii §2.
96. CS 14.
97. See K. Barth in Karl Barth's Table Talk, ed J.D. Godsey, in Scottish Journal of Theology Occasional Papers No. 10, Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1963, pp68-69. ■■■, where he argues:

Heinrich Vogel says that the human nature taken by Christ was a 'holy' flesh. I say no. It is *our* flesh, but if Christ takes on our flesh, then a sanctification of the flesh takes place, and then the man in Christ cannot sin. But the sinlessness of

Christ is a deed, not a quality... *Non posse peccare* is a deed of God, not a quality ...the reality of a sanctified life was a *fight*, not just a being. Jesus had to obey. But it was a fight that could not have another result.

98. CW.V:174.

99. PW.1: 105-106.

100. Brannick: op cit, 252.

101. So Erskine writes about Christ:

So he came into our flesh after it had fallen under the condemnation of death, and through his fulfillment of righteousness under these conditions he had overcome death and nullified the condemnation. ("Thoughts on St Paul's Epistle to the Romans," in The Spiritual Order & Other Papers. Edinburgh: Edmonston & Douglas, 1871, p162-163.)

His assumption of our flesh in its actual conditions qualifies him in a special manner to act for us. (Ibid, 164.)

To Captain James Stirling, Erskine expresses himself thus:

The devil took possession of the flesh, and it is only through the death of the flesh that the devil can be overcome - the voluntary death of the flesh; and how is this to be? Simply through faith in the death of Christ for us. It is thus that we have life. (Letters of Thomas Erskine. Ed. Hanna William, Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1877.

102. Therefore, as one moves away from superhuman notions of Christ towards this notion of lowly humility, the difference between the way by which the Christian God becomes victor and that of the victorious gods of antiquity is highlighted. Jesus Christ comes to us not in the guise of some Perseus who cuts the head from off Medusa with the golden sickle of Hermes and flees with his winged sandals, hidden by the dark helmet stolen from the Stygian Nymphs. Rather, Christ comes as one veiled in *human* limitation.

103. C.E. Gunton: Yesterday and Today: A Study of Continuities in Christology. London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983, p193.

104. CW.V:211.

105. CW.V:106, and Part II of this thesis.

106. CW.V:338.

107. CW.V:225.

108. CW.V:212.



109. *ibid.*
110. CW.V:213.
111. CW.V:213-214.
112. CW.V:214.
113. *ibid.*
114. CW.V:216.
115. CHF 36. *Italics mine.*
116. OCD 66-67.
117. B. Marshall: Christology in Conflict. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987, p161.
118. J. MacIntyre: The Shape of Christology. London: SCM Press Ltd, 1966, p140.
119. *ibid.* 11.
120. D. Bonhoeffer: Lectures on Christology. Trans. Robertson. Glasgow: Collins, 1978, p30.
121. J. Galot: Who is Christ? A Theology of the Incarnation. Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1980, p267.
122. W. Kasper: Jesus the Christ. London: Burns and Oates, 1976, pp20-24.
123. This has been outlined in detail in Part I.
124. This has been outlined in detail in Part II.
125. OCD 29.
126. CW.V:124.
127. CW.V:438-439.
128. CHF 5.
129. See fn 91.
130. CW.V:167.
131. CW.V:159. There is a strong parallel here with Hooker's understanding of the 'person' of incarnation in, The Works of Mr. Richard Hooker, In Eight Books of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity. In Three Volumes. London: William Baynes and Son, 1822, Vol.II, pp160-161.

If the Son of God had taken to himself a man now made and already perfected, it would of necessity follow, that there are in Christ two persons, the one assuming, and the other assumed; whereas the Son of God did not assume a man's person into his own, but man's nature to his own person: and therefore took *semen*, the seed of Abraham, the very first original element of our nature, before it was come to have any personal human subsistence. The flesh and the conjunction of the flesh with God, began both at the one instant; his making and taking to himself our flesh was but one act, so that in Christ there is no personal subsistence but one, and that from everlasting. By taking only the nature of man, he still continueth one person, and changeth but the manner of subsisting, which was before in mere glory the Son of God, and is now in the habit of our flesh. Forasmuch..as Christ hath no personal subsistence but one, whereby we acknowledge him to have been eternally the Son of God, we must..apply to the person of the Son of God, even that which is spoken of Christ according to his human nature. For example, according to the flesh he was born of the Virgin Mary, baptized by John in the river Jordan, by Pilate adjudged to die, and executed by the Jews. We cannot properly say, that the Virgin bore, or John did baptize, or Pilate condemn, or the Jews crucify, the nature of man, because these all are personable attributes; his person is the subject which receiveth them, his nature that which maketh his person capable..to receive. If we should say, that the person of a man in our Saviour Christ was the subject of these things, this were plainly to entrap ourselves in the very snare of the Nestorian heresy. The Son of God took not to himself a man's person, but the nature only of a man. Christ is a person both Divine and human, howbeit not therefore two persons in one; neither both these in one sense, but a person Divine, because he is personally the Son of God; human, because he hath really the nature of the children of man. In Christ. therefore, God and man, "There is (saith Paschasius) a twofold substance, not a twofold person, because one person distinguisheth another, whereas one nature cannot in another become extinct."

132. P. Schoonenberg: "The Kenosis or Self-Emptying of Christ," Concilium 1966 II, Vol.1.2, pp27-36, p27.
133. CW.V:405.
134. L. Richard: "Kenotic Christology in a New Perspective," Église et Théologie, 7, 1976, pp5-39, p27.
135. Part II, p124.
136. J. Macquarrie: "Kenoticism Reconsidered," Theology, 77, 1974, pp115-124, p122.
137. Moule: op cit, 97.
138. A. Hanson: Grace and Truth. London: SPCK, 1975, p22.



139. Richard: op cit, 26.
140. J.A.T. Robinson: The Human Face of God. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973, 208.
141. K. Barth: CD IV.1, 211.
142. PW.1: 231. Also, CW.V:231.
143. CW.V:280.
144. CW.V:134.
145. PW.1:14.
146. E. Duffy: "The Philosophers and the China Shop," New Blackfriars, Oct. 1988, pp447-452, p449. In relation to the divinity and the person of Jesus Christ Brunner states that the 'Deity is the secret of this person,' The Mediator, op cit, 347.
147. CW.V:319.
148. ibid.
149. Richard: op cit, 10.
150. CW.V:160.
151. Origen: First Principles, trans, G.W. Butterworth, London: Society for Promoting Christ Knowledge, 1936, II ch.VI.3, p110. Also John of Damascus: Exposition of the Christian Faith, NPCF<sup>2</sup> Vol IX, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983, p50.

The Word of God, then, was united to flesh through the medium of mind which is intermediate between the purity of God and the grossness of flesh. For the mind holds sway over soul and body, but while the mind is the purist part of the soul God is that of the mind. And when it is allowed by that which is more excellent, the mind of Christ gives proof of its own authority, but it is under the dominion of and obedient to that which is more excellent, and does things which the divine will purposes.
152. M.F. Wiles: "The Nature of the Early Debate about Christ's Human Soul," Journal of Ecclesiastical History, XVI.2, 1965, pp139-151, p141.
153. Origen: op cit, II ch.VI.6, p113. Also IV. ch.IV, pp318-319.
154. See M.F Wiles: op cit, 148, and H.A. Wolfson: "Philosophical Implications of Arianism and Apollinarianism," Dumbarton Oaks Papers, 12, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1958.
155. Letters, Vol.III (131-164). Trans. W. Parsons, Washington D.C., The Catholic University of America Press, 1965.

156. Ambrose of Milan: On the Sacrament of the Lord's Becoming Flesh, 7, 65-68, in G.H. Ettlinger, Jesus, Christ and Saviour, Delaware: Michel Glazier, 1987, p144.
157. T. Aquinas: Summa Theologiae, Vol.48, 3a.1-6, London: Blackfriars, 1976, 3a.6.1, p154.
158. *ibid*: 3a.6.6, p173.
159. This is a concern that is woven throughout Christ in Christian Tradition, Vol 1<sup>2</sup>, A. Grillmeier, trans. J. Bowden, London: Mowbrays, 1975.
160. CW.V:126.
161. Grillmeier: *op cit*, 471.
162. Contra Arianos, 1, 46, ET, Library of the Fathers, Oxford, 1842, cited in N.S. Clark, "Spirit Christology in the Light of Eucharistic Theology", The Heythrop Journal, XXIII, 1982, pp270-284, p271.

He is not sanctified, but the Sanctifier; for He is not sanctified by another, but Himself sanctified Himself, that we may be sanctified in the truth. How then does this take place? What does He mean but this? 'I, being the Father's Word, I give Myself, when become man, the Spirit; and Myself, become man, do I sanctify Him, that henceforth in Me, who am truth (for *Thy Word is truth*), all may be sanctified.

163. CW.V:124.

Here we confront an aspect of Irving's theology that parallels that of the Puritan John Owen, who identifies several actings of the Spirit upon Christ. John Owen: The Works of John Owen<sup>4</sup>, ed. W.H. Goold, Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1981, Vol. III, pp162-168.

1. The Spirit forms the body of Christ in the womb.
2. The Spirit sanctifies the human nature at conception.
3. The Spirit continues the work begun at conception;
  - a. Christ exercised grace through a rational soul.
  - b. Christ's human nature has simple nescience.
4. The Spirit anointed Christ with extraordinary gifts in order to exercise his office on earth:
  - a. Visible anointing.
  - b. Christ gave himself to the Spirit in his public ministry.
  - c. Christ was full of the Spirit.
5. The Spirit brought about the miraculous works during Christ's ministry.
6. The Spirit guided, directed, comforted and supported Christ.
7. Christ offered himself up through the Eternal Spirit:
  - a. Sanctified to God to be a voluntary sacrifice.
  - b. Performed this through graces of Spirit.
    1. Love to mankind.
    2. Zeal for glory.
    3. Submission to will of God.



4. Faith and trust in God.

8. The Spirit preserved his body from corruption and decay in the tomb.
9. The Spirit reunited his soul and body at the resurrection.
10. The Spirit glorified the human nature of Christ.
11. The work of the Spirit towards Christ shows;
  - a. He is the Christ.
  - b. We love him.
  - c. We will seek to be conformed to him.

For a thoroughgoing and erudite discussion of John Owen's christology, see the 1989 King's College, London thesis of Alan Spence: Incarnation and Inspiration: John Owen and the Coherence of Christology. Although coming to an independent realisation of the possible influence of Owen upon Irving's christology, I am greatly indebted to the stimulating and scholarly insights raised in ongoing discussion and friendship with Alan Spence. There can be little doubt that Irving had contact with the christology of Owen, but it cannot be argued that the former's is a regurgitation of the earlier Puritan christology of the latter. See also, D.W. Bebbington: Evangelicalism in Modern Britain. A History From the 1730s to the 1980s. London: Unwin Hyman, 1989, p80. One of the major differences between the two scholars is the fact that Irving attempts to explicitly unite the trinitarian being of God with the incarnation in a manner missing from that of the more scholarly and precise Owen.

164. Clark: op cit, 271.

165. CW.V:94.

166. B. Hebblethwaite: The Incarnation. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, p72, also p161.

167. CW.V:127.

168. LHN 28-29.

169. CW.V:433. The quote continues:

But this is not the mystery of the Father's Godhead...The mystery of the Father's Godhead, which Christ came forth to manifest, is this, That in the Father who is the fountain of the Godhead, generating the Son, and through and with Him the Holy Ghost, is hid and contained that incommunicable and inexhaustible fulness..The Father..is not any manifestation of God, but God unmanifested; and therefore He is so often styled God..To the end that there might by an Infinite and Incomprehensible to be worshipped through the finite and comprehensible, it standeth under the person of the Father, in whom the infinite Godhead of the Son and the infinite Godhead of the Holy Ghost is worshipped, as well as the infinite person of the Father; but all standing under the Person of the Father, because of the offices in the visible, which the Son and the



Holy Ghost had undertaken, for bringing into effect the Christ constitution, or eternal purpose of God.

170. W. Wordsworth: 'The Excursion', Book Fourth, p184, The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, ed. W. Knight, Edinburgh: William Paterson, 1884.
171. CW.V:121. Also, OCD 31; Owen: op cit III, 168.
172. S.T. Coleridge: Unpublished Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Ed. E.L. Griggs, London; Constable & Co Ltd, 1932, p326. Also, A. Andrews: op cit, (New Englander), p42. That Irving was once a member of the Highgate coterie is reflected both in Irving's dedication to S. T. Coleridge in *Sermons, Lectures and Occasional Discourses*, and in Coleridge's comment that "Irving has caught many things from me; but he would never attend to anything he thought he could not use in his pulpit," 'Table Talk', May 15, 1830. The Complete Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. In 7 volumes, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1875.
173. S.T. Coleridge: Opus Maximum, Toronto: Victoria University Library, Toronto, Canada, unpublished, pp238-239.
174. *ibid*: 242
175. *ibid*: 242-243. 'The Will therefore as being and because a Will therefore a personal being having the *causa sui* or ground and principle of its being in its own inexhaustible causative might.'
176. J.D. Boulger: Coleridge as Religious Thinker, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961, p140.
177. S.T. Coleridge: Huntington MSS, unpublished manuscript, San Marino, California: The Huntington Library, pp39-43
178. Opus Maximum: p119.
179. C. Turk: Coleridge and Mill, Aldershot: Avebury, 1988, p157.
180. S.T. Coleridge: Aids to Reflection<sup>2</sup>, London: Edward Moxon, 1854, p119.
181. Opus Maximum: p119.
182. *ibid*: 230.
183. *ibid*:104.
184. *ibid*:230.
185. CHF 63.  
Aids 47:

It is sufficient...to prove that some distinct and consistent meaning may be attached to the assertion of the learned and philosophic Apostle, that the *Spirit beareth witness with our*



spirit, that is, with the will, as the supernatural in man and the principle of our personality - of that I mean, by which we are responsible agents; person, and not merely living things.

186. Aids, 217. See also O. Pfleidderer: The Development of Theology in Germany since Kant and its Progress in Great Britain since 1825, London: Swan Sonnenschein and Co., 1890, p310, where Pfleidderer points out that Coleridge's understanding of original sin is much more a Kantian than a biblical interpretation. Coleridge parallels Kant in saying that regarding original sin, every man is the adequate representative of ALL men, and that the first man in time, Adam of Genesis, is only the type of the race.

(Original Sin) is made to mean that sin as spiritual evil is a condition of the will, which is the ground and cause of all sins, that it was not inherited from without, but is the act of the will itself, and so 'self-originated.

Cf Irving: CHF pp3-5 where he argues for the relation between Christ's sinlessness and the collectivity of original sin.

187. The following is Irving's own dedication on the personal gift of SLOD to Coleridge: "To my Sage, Counsellor and most honoured Friend Samuel Taylor Coleridge Esq," MSS British Library. See also D.W. Bebbington: op cit, pp80-81
188. SLOD 24.
189. See fn 163.
190. OCD 66-67.
191. See, T. Erskine: An Essay on Faith, Edinburgh: Waugh & Innes, 1828<sup>5</sup>; The Purpose of God in the Creation of Man, Edinburgh: Edmonston & Douglas, 1870; The Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel, Edinburgh: Waugh & Innes, 1828<sup>6</sup>.
192. CHF 14. There is a strong parallel here with Theodore of Mopsuestia: Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Nicene Creed, Woodbrooke Studies, Vol.V, Cambridge, Mass: W, Heffer & Sons Limited, 1932, pp56-57.

It was necessary that He should assume not only the body but also the immortal and rational soul; and not only the death of the body had to cease but also that of the soul, which is sin..It was..necessary that sin should have first been abolished, as after its abolition there would be no entry for death. It is indeed clear that the strength of sin has its origin in the will of the soul..It was.. necessary that Christ should assume not only the body but also the soul. The enemy of the soul had to be removed first and then for the sake of it that of the body, because if death is from sin and the same death is in the corruption of the body, sin would have first to be abolished and the abolition of death would follow by itself.

193. *ibid.* See also, D.M. MacKinnon: "Prologomena to Christology", The Journal of Theological Studies, XXXIII.1, 1982, pp146-160, p157.

The very unity of the threefold God is as it were put at risk in the incarnation, in Jesus' total dependence on faith and prayer in his temptation.

194. CW.IV:482.

195. CW.IV:271.

196. OCD 23.

197. PW.2:209, italics mine.

198. CW.V:166, also 134.

199. PW.1:387.

200. CW.V:439; 320-321; CHF 9.

201. CW.V:529.

202. CW.V:134; also 437.

By assuming into Himself the human, nature, and becoming the Christ of God, the personality of the Son is still the same: it is the eternal, only-begotten Son of God, who speaketh...heareth...acteth...suffereth, and yet the Divine nature is ever distinct, and never to be confounded with the human nature...The words, and acts, and sufferings of Christ, are not to be called the Divine nature only, nor of the human nature only, but of the person, Christ, God-man; one person, through two natures.

203. S, Kierkegaard: Journals and Papers, eds, trans, H.V. Hong, E.M. Hong, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962, Vol.2, p137.

204. LHN 66-67.

205. CS 25.

206. LHN 68.

207. Brunner: *op cit*, 493.

208. *ibid.*

209. PW.1: 12-13.

210. Strachan: *op cit*, p22.

211. See G. Lampe: God as Spirit, London: SCM Press Ltd, 1983. For a succinct appraisal of Lampe in relation to Irving, see, C. Gunton: *op*



cit, SJT, 41.3, pp373-374, (fn 73). Cf with Schweizer's incisive comment:

If what we mean by Holy Spirit is that God is present and active on earth, then all Jesus' works are nothing else but the life of the Spirit of God. But the fact that Jesus does not speak about the Spirit but rather acts and speaks in the Spirit points to something crucial. In the work of the Spirit we once more encounter God in the first place as a stranger, the unexpected One, the One who cannot immediately be pinned down in an intelligible doctrine. The Holy Spirit, London: SCM Press, 1981, p48.

212. N. Hook: "A Spirit Christology", Theology 75, 1972, pp276- 232, p276.

213. D. Ritschl: The Logic of Theology, London: SCM Press Ltd, 1986.

214. T. Dunn: "Trinity and History", Theological Studies, 45, 1984, pp139-152, p143.

215. *ibid.*

216. B. Bobrinskoy: "The Indwelling of the Spirit in Christ. "Pneumatic Christology" in the Cappadocian Fathers," St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly, 28.1, 1984, pp49-65, p49.

217. J.D.G. Dunn: Jesus and the Spirit, London: SCM Press, 1975, p320.

218. Bobrinskoy: *op cit.* He identifies two questions fundamental to a 'pneumatic christology'.

1. What is the place of the Spirit in the redemptive work of the incarnate Word? This refers to the Spirit's relation with the economy of salvation.
2. What is the place of the Holy Spirit within the eternal being of the Son? This refers to the Spirit's relation to the eternal inner life of the Trinity.

219. E. Jüngel: God as the Mystery of the World, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark Ltd, 1983, p 304.

220. T. Dunn: *op cit*, p143.

221. Jüngel: *op cit*, p 304.

222. A recent, modern example of this is T.F. Torrance, who in advocating a return to an Athanasian interpretation of divine being, has not addressed the deficiency of Athanasius' pneumatology. Consequently, the thrust of his book cannot but fail to address the contemporary search for a meaningful and adequate expression of the Spirit's relation to the Son in incarnation and redemption. See T.F. Torrance: The Trinitarian Faith. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988.

223. Cited in Bobrinskoy: *op cit*, p61.

224. *ibid.*

225. V. Lossky: The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church, London: 1957, pp166-167.



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